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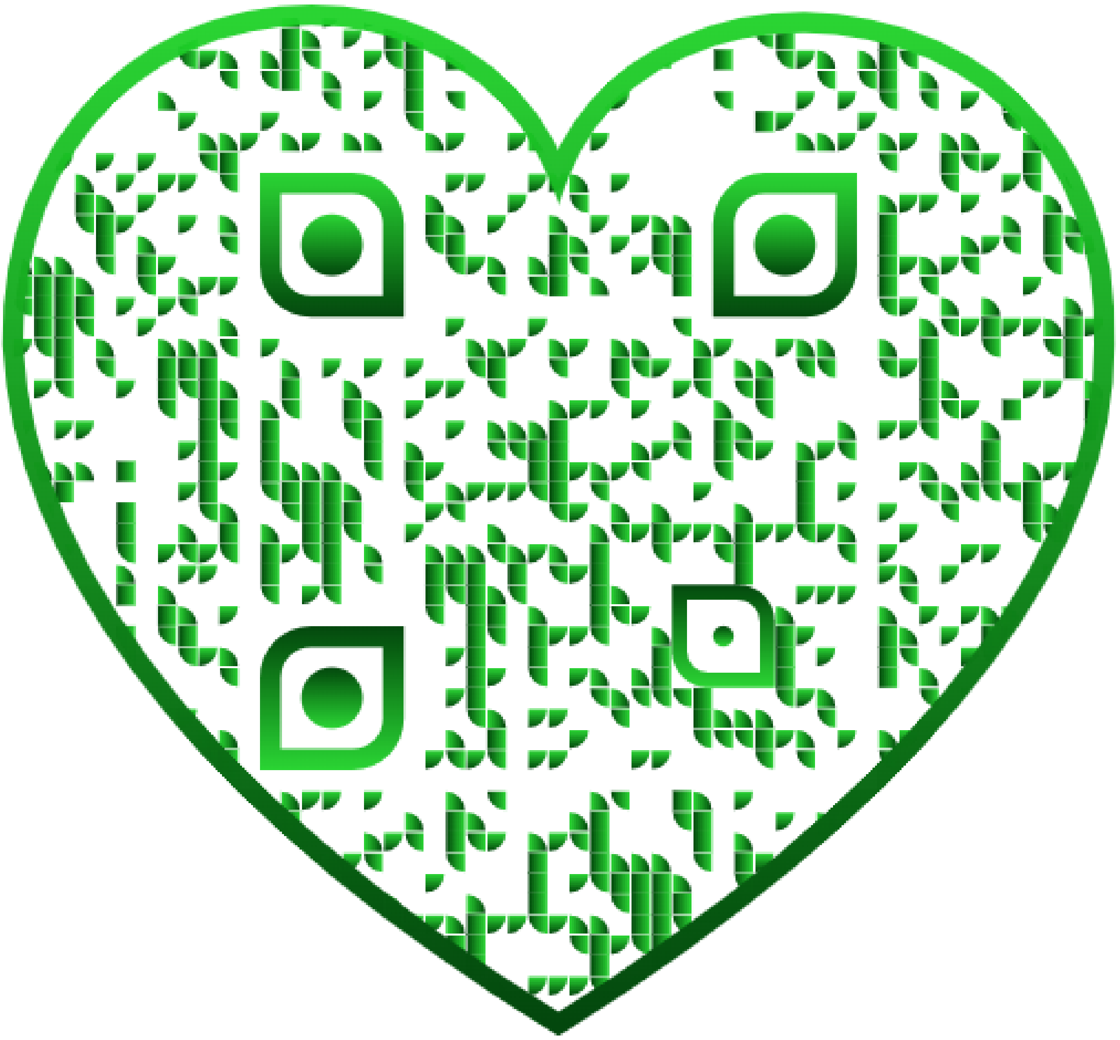

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Contents

MAY 2018 **ISSUE 248**

Features

28 Def Leppard
The first forty years of Sheffield's finest. By Joe Elliott, Rick Savage, Rick Allen, Phil Collen and Vivian Campbell.

40 The Temperance Movement
You've heard their songs, seen them live and their new album has hit the Top 10. But just who are the men of The Temperance Movement?

46 Stone Temple Pilots
After the tragic deaths of two singers, how did they pick up the pieces and return with an excellent new album?

50 The White Buffalo
Jake Smith is touching people with his songs woven from resonant lyrics and a blend of rural folk, punk, rock and more.

52 Judas Priest
"We are the most relevant metal band in the world today," says frontman Rob Halford.

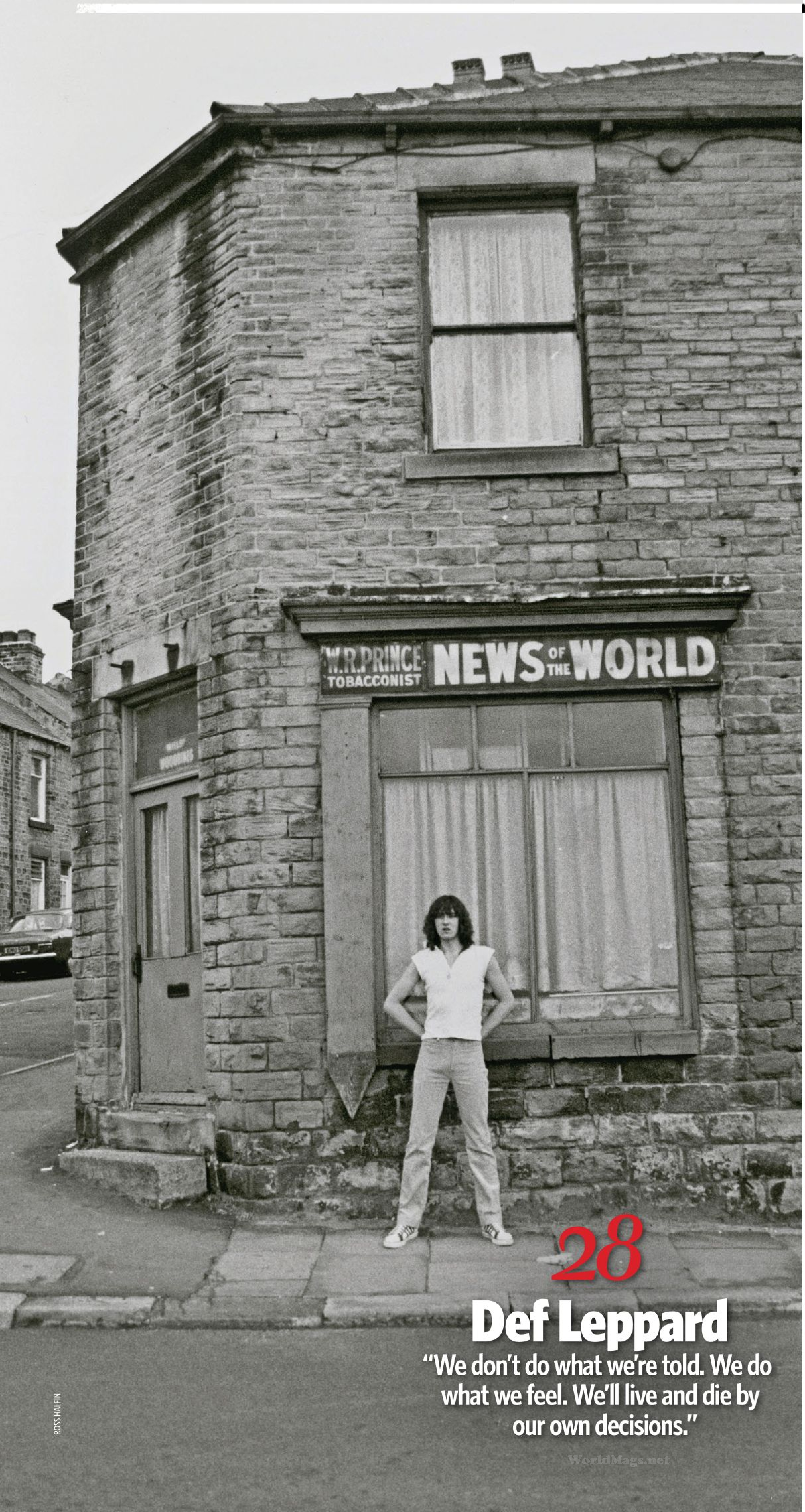
56 Thee Hypnotics
In the late 80s, with "one foot in Blue Cheer and one foot in the punk side of Led Zep", Thee Hypnotics were a band out of time. Now they're back to save us again.

60 Sandy Denny
She had one of the most captivating voices of her era, but due to insecurity and tragedy she never fulfilled her potential.

68 A Perfect Circle
The confrontational supergroup fronted by Tool vocalist Maynard James Keenan returns.

74 Britrock Must Be Destroyed!
Ginger Wildheart, Terrorvision's Tony Wright and Reef's Gary Stringer share tales of excess and mayhem ahead of their bands' joint UK tour.

78 Brian Fallon
The Gaslight Anthem frontman and rising solo artist is "very optimistic about the ability of music to comfort people".



28

Def Leppard

"We don't do what we're told. We do what we feel. We'll live and die by our own decisions."

ROSS HALFIN

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Contents

MAY 2018 ISSUE 248

46 Stone Temple Pilots
"That I'm the singer of STP blows my mind as much as anyone else's!"

ROSS HALFIN

Regulars

12 The Dirt
Skynyrd, Elton, Slayer and more to retire from the road... Say hello to Kris Barras and Demob Happy, welcome back Adrian Vandenberg, Kino and Fanny Walked The Earth, say goodbye to Russ Solomon, Pete Boot, John Perry Barlow...

22 The Stories Behind The Songs
Kansas
The making of the monster hit *Dust In The Wind.*

24 Q&A
Charlie Starr
The Blackberry Smoke singer/guitarist on brawls, Beefheart, Skynyrd and how "everything that I enjoy is bad for you".

82 CR's Social Club
Write! Rage! And more! Just a few of the many things you can find when you head over to classicrockmagazine.com

85 Reviews
New albums from Rick Parfitt, Manic Street Preachers, Stone Temple Pilots, Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow, Monster Magnet, FM, The Damned... Reissues from Led Zeppelin, Anthrax, Wishbone Ash, Thee Hypnotics, Marillion, Moody Blues, Paradise Lost... DVDs, films and books on Thunder, Steve Lukather, Scott Ian, The Slits, LA Thrash... Live reviews of Saxon, Diamond Head, Brian Fallon, King Gizzard & His Lizard Wizard, Starcrawler, Rock Goddess...

105 Live Previews
Must-see gigs from Nickelback, Dead Daisies, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, Jon Hiseman-Clem Clempson-Mark Clarke and Ben Harper & Charlie Musselwhite. Plus full gig listings – find out who's playing where and when.

130 Heavy Load
Derek Smalls
The Spinal Tap bass player answers life's big questions as he finally releases his debut solo album. And no, *Jazz Odyssey* didn't make the cut...

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hmv RECOMMENDED

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Levellers
We The Collective
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Monster Magnet
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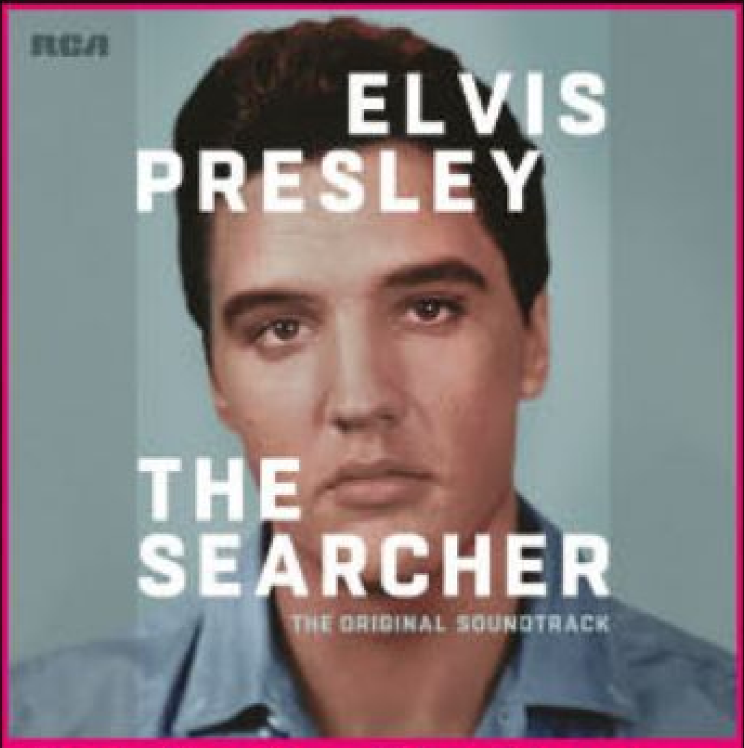
out now on CD & vinyl
Uptempo and savage in both sound and spirit, Monster Magnet's 10th album is the real deal.

Rick Parfitt
Over And Out
out now on CD, CD/t-shirt & vinyl
Featuring 10 new songs, this is an album of depth and passion showcasing the softer side of Rick as a writer, artist and performer.

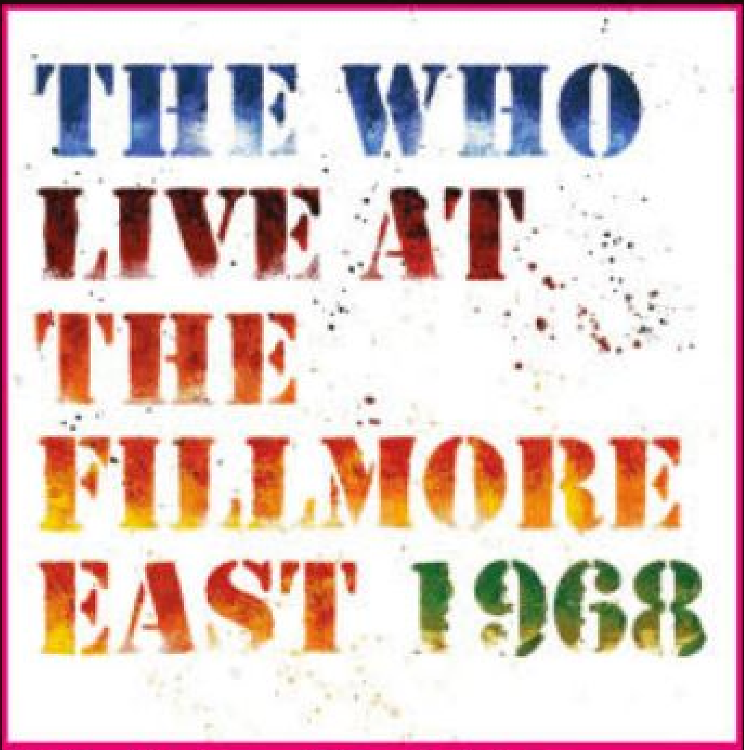


Elvis Presley - The Searcher: The Original Soundtrack
out 6 April on CD, deluxe 3CD & 2LP
A collection of hits, powerful performances, rare versions of songs and music that inspired him. The 3CD set also includes a 40-page hardcover book.

Eels
The Deconstruction
out 6 April on CD & 2LP vinyl
The 12th studio album from Eels features 15 brand new tracks and marks their first new music since 2014.

Breaking Benjamin
Ember
out 13 April on CD & vinyl
The American rockers make a welcome return with their sixth studio album. Includes Red Cold River, Feed The Wolf and Blood.

Brothers Osborne
Port Saint Joe
out 20 April on CD & vinyl
The Nashville-based Brothers are back with this new 10-track album. Includes the single Shoot Me Straight.



The Who - Live At The Fillmore East 1968
out 20 April on 2CD & 3LP vinyl
2018 marks the 50th anniversary of these legendary unreleased recordings from the Fillmore East, New York City on April 5 and 6, 1968.

Black Stone Cherry
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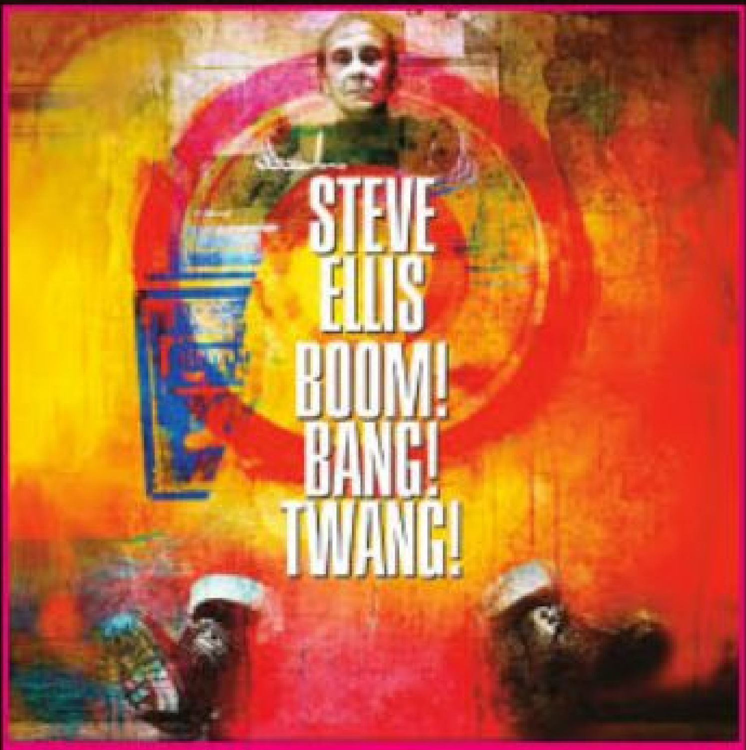
A meaty blues-based rock album, with unexpected sonic twists like punchy horn sections, Southern gospel organ and forays into funk and country.



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Do ya wanna get rocked? Well, as you're holding a magazine in your hand called *Classic Rock*, I figure the chances are pretty good. And what better band to celebrate than the one who brought that particular phrase to the forefront of our collective consciousness. Yep, this month we're all about the mighty Def Leppard, a band who have enjoyed more triumph and weathered more adversity than most over their now four decades of existence. We talk to Joe, Sav, Rick, Phil and Viv about their incredible 'You honestly couldn't make this stuff up if you tried' history.

Elsewhere, we check in with the rejuvenated Stone Temple Pilots and their new singer; spend some time getting to know the men of The Temperance Movement; take a look at the huge talent but tragically short life of Sandy Denny (who died 40 years ago this month); try to get inside the mind of Maynard James Keenan and Billy Howerdel as they relaunch A Perfect Circle; drag the protagonists of the forthcoming Britrock Must Die! tour to the scene of past crimes; and so much more. Enjoy!

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

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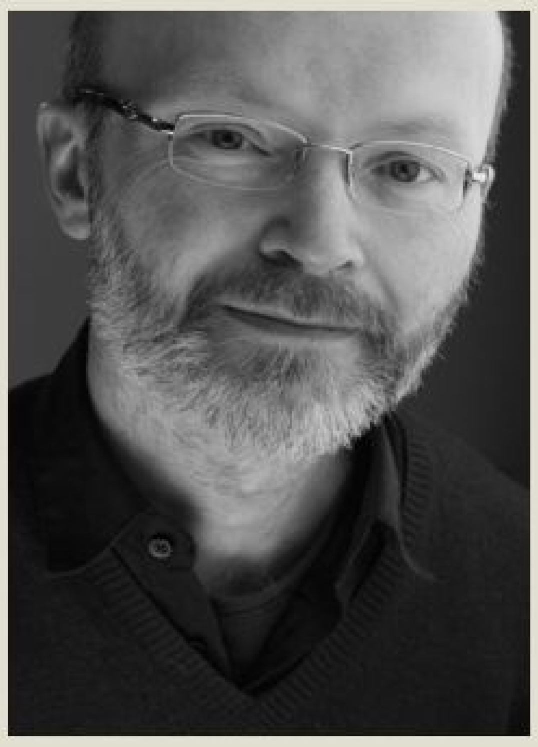

NICK HASTED
Nick somehow combines being a rock, jazz and film journalist, and is the author of three books, most recently a new edition of *You Really Got Me: The Story of The Kinks*. A *Classic Rock* writer since 2013, this month he enjoyed discovering the still strongly beating-but-battered heart of Stone Temple Pilots. Read all about it on page 46.

MICK WALL
Mick Wall is a former Editor In Chief of *Classic Rock*. This issue he reconnected with Joe Elliott to discuss the four tumultuous decades (so far!) of Def Leppard. When not writing for *CR*, Mick is hard at work on *The Caveman*, the official biography of producer Kevin Shirley, full of tales of Led Zep, Iron Maiden, Aerosmith, Black Country Communion and more.

ROSS HALFIN
Readers of *Classic Rock* will be very familiar with the sterling photography of Mr Halfin, or The Master as he's more commonly known round these parts. This month he photographed Stone Temple Pilots and their new singer (p46), and also raided his archive to unearth some of his brilliant Def Leppard photos. For prints and more, visit www.rosshalfin.com

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INSIDE THE WORLD OF ROCK

the DiRT

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Lynyrd Skynyrd: their final tour will have support acts including Bad Company, Blackberry Smoke, Kid Rock and Blackfoot.

Sir Elton John: announced a 300-show, three-year swansong.

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ELTON JOHN & SLAYER: GETTY; LYNYRD SKYNYRD: ALISON CLARKE

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road...

Skynyrd, Slayer, Elton… and maybe even Kiss, to retire from touring.

As the old saying goes, nothing lasts forever. And the past couple of months have seen some big names announce their retirement from the road. Following Back Sabbath's withdrawal in 2017 and Alex Lifeson's admission that Rush "have no plans to tour or record any more", Lynyrd Skynyrd, Slayer, Sir Elton John, Paul Simon and the Pretty Things are among those who have announced that this will be their last year of touring. And as this issue went to press, speculation abounded that Kiss – who undertook a farewell tour in 2000 but then changed their mind about quitting the road – were another band poised to call it a day.

Sir Elton, who held a press conference in New York to announce his 300-show, three-year swansong, seems dead-set on it being his final goodbye, billed, naturally, Farewell Yellow Brick Road. "My priorities in my life are now my children, my husband and my family," he explained. Commencing in September, the tour is expected to head to Europe in May 2019.

Lynyrd Skynyrd's The Last Of The Street Survivors Farewell Tour kicks off in North America and will run there until September. By the time the southern rockers decommission their tour bus they will have been gigging for more than 50 years. Announcing the farewell tour, founder/guitarist Gary Rossington said: "It's hard to imagine, after all these years, the band that Ronnie [Van Zant], Allen Collins and myself started back in Jacksonville would resonate for this long and to so many generations of fans. I'm certain they are looking down from above, amazed that the music has touched so many."

> **"After thirty-five years it's time to collect my pension."**
>
> **Slayer's Tom Araya**

European shows have yet to be confirmed, although Skynyrd have announced that they'll be joined on the tour by various support acts including Bad Company, Blackberry Smoke, Kid Rock, Marshall Tucker Band, .38 Special and Blackfoot.

Paul Simon, whose career spans seven decades, said "it feels a little unsettling, a touch exhilarating and something of a relief" to bring things to "a natural end". He says that occasional future live performances are a possibility, but in "acoustically pristine halls", and with profits going to "various philanthropic organisations, particularly those whose objective is to save the planet, ecologically". In Britain he signs off with shows at Manchester Arena on July 10, Glasgow SSE Hydro 11 and London's Hyde Park 15.

Despite the death of guitarist Jeff Hanneman five years ago, few foresaw this year being the end of Slayer, one of the so-called Big Four of thrash metal. They continued with Gary Holt of Exodus as Hanneman's replacement, and recorded the album *Repentless* in 2015. As yet the band have not made an official comment, although in 2016 bassist/frontman Tom Araya said: "After thirty-five years it's time to collect my pension. It just gets harder and harder to go back out on the road." In North America Slayer will be supported by bands including Lamb Of God, Anthrax, Behemoth and Testament. European shows are yet to be confirmed

The Pretty Things, who have been performing constantly since 1963, will leave a sizeable gap when at the end of this year they will cease electric performances, signing off with a major show at the Roundhouse in London (details when we get them). Their 55th anniversary is to be marked by a deluxe edition of *SF Sorrow*, widely regarded as one of rock music's first conceptual albums.

Although Black Sabbath have called time on the band as a live act, Ozzy Osbourne isn't planning on quitting live performances after he completes a summer tour that includes headlining the final day, Sunday, at his year's Download Festival. "I'm not retiring. I'm still going to be doing gigs," he states.

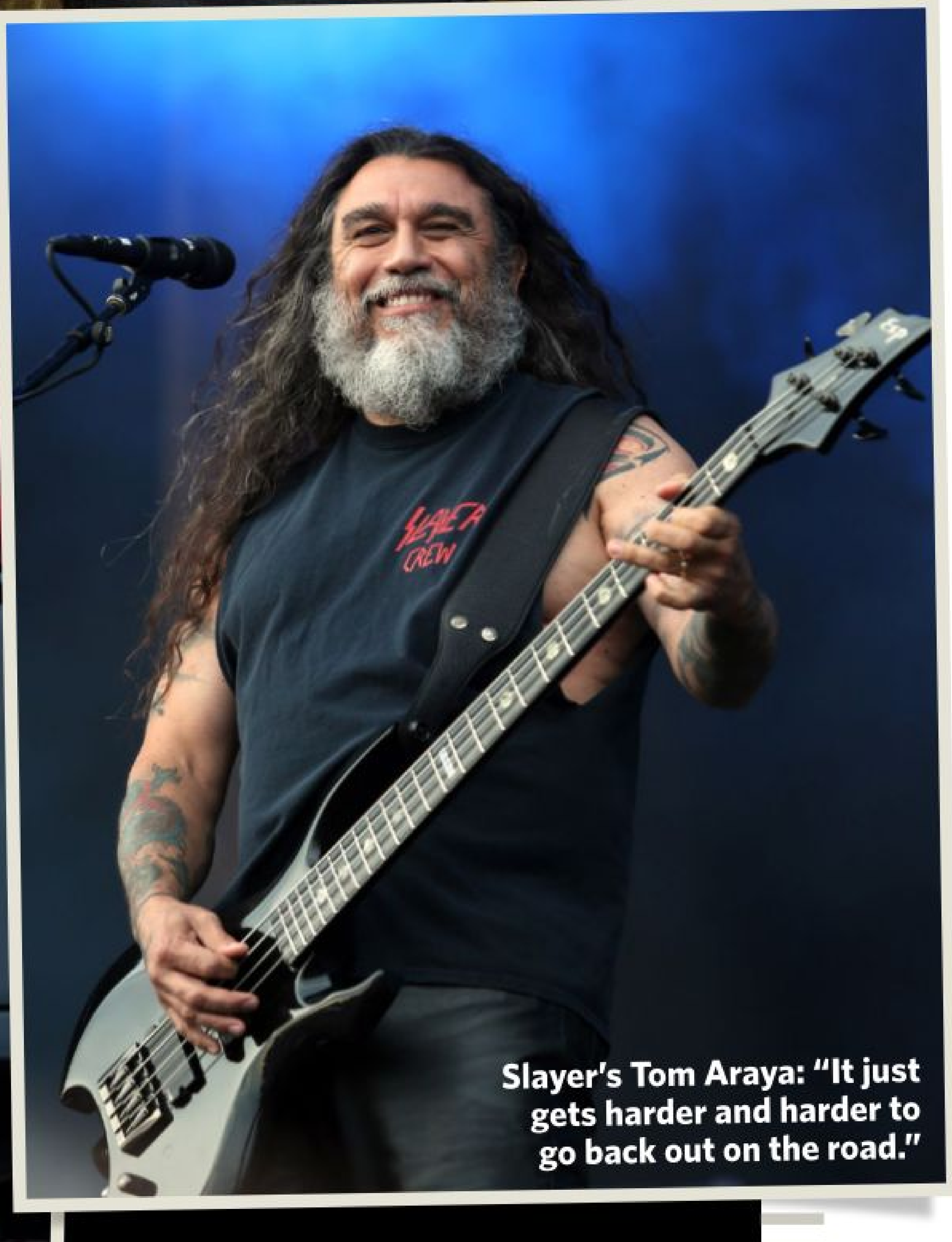
Robert Plant has insisted – yet again – that he still has no plans to reunite with Led Zeppelin, telling *Esquire* magazine he'd "be a whore" to do so, and adding, with tongue in cheek: "You have to be really careful about maybe putting a bit more time into playing bingo, enjoying what time you have left."

But it's not all doom and gloom as far as seeing veteran bands still rocking on stage. Despite having announced their farewell tour back in 2010, the Scorpions are still out there, undertaking its latest lap. Although in 1982 The Who's frontman Roger Daltrey announced their exit, "before we become parodies of ourselves", they're still going strong. And the Rolling Stones are rewriting the rule book with every show they perform, although drummer Charlie Watts recently told the *The Guardian*: "It wouldn't bother me if [the band] said: "That's it… Enough." He added: "I would hate it to dissolve not amicably. I would like Mick to say, or me or Keith or whoever: 'I don't want to do it any more', for whatever reason, and we just say that's it. I wouldn't want it to be an argument or whatever."

One man with the integrity to turn down a money-making opportunity is original/former Guns N' Roses guitarist Izzy Stradlin, who, according to GN'R's former manager Alan Niven, flew out to a show in the US to consider playing with the reunited band – including Slash and Duff McKagan – but then changed his mind.

"Izzy left after the sound-check. He didn't want to have anything to do with it," Niven reveals. "Had it gone well and everybody had been happy, and there had been a little bit of brotherhood, I'm sure he would have stayed."

On the other hand, another unexpected reunion has worked out. For the first time in 32 years, Todd Rundgren is to reunite with his Utopia bandmates – Kasim Sulton, Willie Wilcox and Ralph Schuckett – for a North American tour than runs until June 5. There are currently no plans for Utopia to play some shows in the UK, but they shouldn't be ruled out. **DL**



Slayer's Tom Araya: "It just gets harder and harder to go back out on the road."

This month The Dirt was compiled by Simon Bradley, Lee Dorrian, Jamie Hibbard, Jo Kendall, Hanna May Kilroy, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Henry Yates

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the DIRT

RIP

Thank you and good night.

Craig MacGregor

Sept 13, 1949 – Feb 9, 2018

Foghat will miss their former bass player, nicknamed Thunderfingers, who has died of lung cancer, aged 68. Iowa-born Craig MacGregor was "co-captain of the group's rhythm section" from 1976 to '82 then on and off until 2015, and played on albums including their multi-platinum-selling *Live*. He also worked with Blue Öyster Cult's Buck Dharma.

Pete Boot

Sept 30, 1950 – Feb 27, 2018

Former Judas Priest singer Allan Atkins has led the tributes to drummer Pete Boot, who at 67 finally lost his battle with Parkinson's disease. Boot appeared on Budgie's 1974 album *In For The Kill!*, and he and Atkins played together in the band Lion. "We never got the record deal we hoped for [with Lion] but the memories will remain until my passing," Atkins says.

Zeno Roth

June 30, 1956 – Feb 5, 2018

Zeno Roth, the guitarist with melodic hard rockers Zeno, has died of unspecified cause. He was 61 years old. Born in Düsseldorf, Roth was the younger brother of Scorpions/Electric Sun guitarist Uli Jon, and played bass on three Electric Sun albums. Formed in 1984, Zeno (the band) were very popular in Japan.

Russ Solomon

Sept 22, 1925 – March 4, 2018

A high-school dropout from California, Russ Solomon went on to found Tower Records, which at its peak had almost 200 shops in more than a dozen countries. The company offered a pioneering business model during the 1990s, but a number of factors led to its demise. Soloman suffered a heart attack at home. He was 92.

Didier Lockwood

Feb 11, 1956 – Feb 18, 2018

French jazz violinist Didier Lockwood, best known to rock fans for having collaborated with Magma and Pierre Moerlen's Gong, suffered a fatal heart attack and died at the age of 62. Influenced by fellow countryman and fusion violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, Lockwood experimented with the electric violin and played as a soloist and with many groups, recording more than 20 albums in his career.

John Perry Barlow

Oct 3, 1947 – Feb 7, 2018

John Perry Barlow was best known as a lyricist for the Grateful Dead from 1971 to 1995, contributing to songs including *Cassidy, Mexicali Blues* and *Looks Like Rain*. He also lobbied for internet rights and press freedom until his death at the age of 70. The Dead's Bob Weir, a friend since the age of 15, said: "John will live on in the songs that we wrote."

Van McLain

Died March 2, 2018

The death of Van McLain (born Van McElvain) effectively puts an end to the melodic rock band Shooting Star, who had been on hold since their lead vocalist/guitarist contracted the West Nile virus in 2015. Shooting Star's ninth and most recent album, the self-financed *Into The Night*, was released that same year.

Ana-Marie Borg

May 20, 1963 – March 4, 2018

The former vocalist with Thunderstick, Ana-Marie Borg has lost a battle with cancer. She sang on the group's 1983 EP *Feel Like Rock 'N' Roll* (although her replacement Jodee Valentine was pictured on the sleeve), and the following year she performed on UK boogie combo Spider's second album, *Rough Justice*.

Nathan Gunn

Died February 23, 2018

Nathan Gunn, bass player with the Aberdeen-based melodic rock band Estrella, died in a vehicle collision. Just 30, he was due to become a first-time father in August.
A statement from Estrella said: "A shining star is now rocking out with the greats in one of the best supergroups that there will be."

STEFAN SCHIPPER/PRESS

WELCOME BACK

Adrian Vandenberg

The former Whitesnake guitarist and his MoonKings are back. His leopardskin outfit most certainly isn't.

Adrian Vandenberg is best known as the guitarist with Whitesnake during the group's late-1980s commercial breakthrough period. Before he and David Coverdale parted ways in 1999, Vandenberg remained the singer's foil throughout much of that decade. Vandenberg's current band, Vandenberg's MoonKings, have just released their second album, *Mk II*.

Your group Vandenberg released three critically acclaimed albums in the first half of the eighties. Why did they never make the big time?
It was down to lots of reasons. Our management wasn't strong enough, and in those days bands played in jeans and T-shirts. I wanted to make an anti-statement, and wore a stupid leopardskin outfit. That may have contributed to why I wasn't taken seriously. Plus the singer [Bert Heerink] had a great voice but very little personality on stage.

Your belief in your own band was so strong that you turned down the first invitation to join Whitesnake.
Yeah. David announced to *Sounds* magazine that Whitesnake's next guitarist would be an unknown Dutch guy. I was pretty surprised, because we hadn't talked yet [laughs]. I was pretty flattered, but I was happy with what I was doing. When we met, David went after my girlfriend but didn't get her [laughs]. He was a real charmer. We stayed in touch.

You eventually joined in 1986. It must have led to some exciting times.
It did. Vandenberg had hit a ceiling and I felt bad about leaving the guys, but knowing what I do now – there were lawsuits a few years ago – I shouldn't have worried. By the time we got Vivian [Campbell], Rudy [Sarzo] and Tommy [Aldridge] we were firing on all six and David was singing amazingly.

You sustained a serious wrist injury on the eve of recording *Slip Of The Tongue*. As a former band leader you must have understood Coverdale's decision to bring in Steve Vai?
Of course. And we spoke about it a lot. We decided that if anyone was going to play on those songs I'd written it should be Steve, because he was the hottest property from the States. It was frustrating, but David had no alternative.

> "It would be logical for David Coverdale and I to record again."

You guested with Whitesnake at the Sweden Rock Festival in 2011. Do you still have unfinished business with Coverdale?
We still talk several times each month. With the connection we have I feel that it would be logical for us to someday record some stuff together again, maybe make a blues album?

Your next group after Whitesnake, Manic Eden, made some great music; the self-titled album from 1994 remains very underrated.
Leaving that band felt like abandoning a baby. But David called up out of the blue when he finished working with Jimmy Page, and what was I supposed to do?

There was a fairly lengthy silence before you returned with Vandenberg's MoonKings in 2013?
Well, I became a father and then broke up with my girlfriend. I didn't wanna be a dad who just stuck his head around the door. Before I realised it, more than ten years had gone. But now it's time to make some cool music again. **DL**

Mk II is out now via Mascot Records.

WorldMags.net

"I always knew I was meant to be on a stage with a guitar in my hand."

★ HIGH HOPES

The Kris Barras Band

Having been a cage fighter, the music scene holds no fears for this blues-rock contender.

Kris Barras knows a thing or two about seizing the day. "My dad was the reason I started playing guitar," says the newest addition to Mascot Records' renowned blues-rock roster. "I was five years old and I'd go to the pub every weekend to watch him in bands. But he died of cancer in 2012, about six days before his fifty-fifth birthday. It made me re-evaluate things. That was the reason I gave music another shot."

Until that moment, Barras had led a curious double life. Raised in Torquay, his fiery fretwork was forged under the influence of Gary Moore, the Allmans and Lynyrd Skynyrd. But while he kept his chops up playing with weekend covers bands, it was his parallel career as a professional cage fighter that paid the bills.

"I fought in Las Vegas and Singapore," explains the 32-year-old, "and I only lost two fights out of close to twenty. When you're in the ring you don't really feel anything, but a week after, you'd be limping. I had broken ribs, broken toes, a broken nose…"

There were times on the live circuit, Barras recalls, when those pugilist skills came in handy. "I had one incident around 2010. It was the end of the night in the local pub. I was carrying out a bass bin and there was this big biker guy, about six-four, nineteen stone. I brushed up against him and all hell broke loose. He came charging at me and I just did a jab. He went white and looked like he was about to start crying – this big fucking biker guy shitting himself at this guitarist kid."

But after his father's death, Barras reassessed his priorities. He quit the ring, dropped the covers and dug deep on his own original songs. His debut album *Lucky 13* was released in 2016, followed by a shop-window set at last year's Ramblin' Man Fair that sparked the interest of his new label.

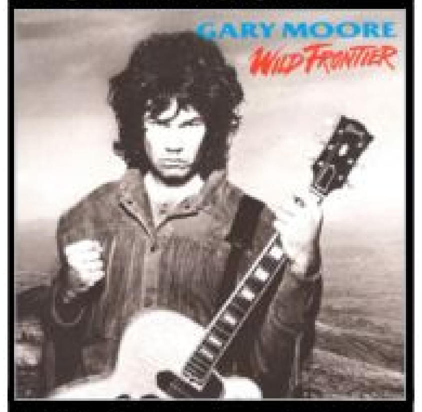
"We were in the pub after I'd signed," he recalls, "and next thing, there's armed police running past, helicopters, people screaming. Sky News was saying there was a mad gunman on the loose. It turned out to be a couple of guys who'd had a fight in Oxford Circus tube station!"

Barras's new record *The Divine And Dirty* arrives this month "I'm not religious," he says of the album title, "but it's got that southern gospel sound, which is like the 'divine', and then there's the dirty slide riffs. *Kick Me Down* is about not letting people take you down to their level. *Blood On Your Hands* was about the case where that lad was having suicidal thoughts and was texting his ex-girlfriend, and she was encouraging him to do it. I just thought: 'How can someone be that evil?'"

Most poignant is *Watching Over Me*, written for his father. "Deep down," he says, "I always knew I was meant to be on a stage with a guitar in my hand. My dad would have loved to have seen this." **HY**

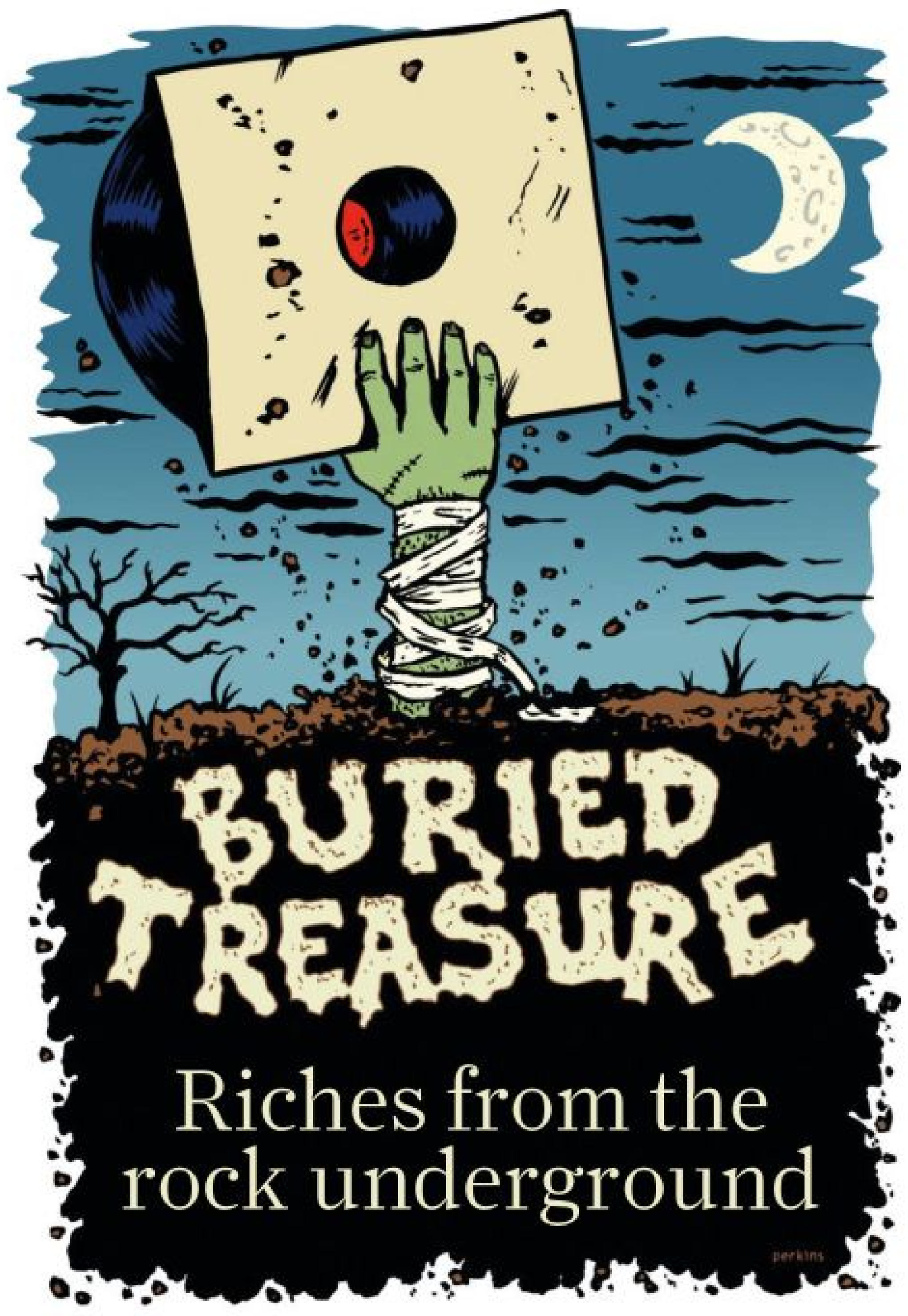
The Divine And Dirty is released on April 6. Kris Barras supports Beth Hart on her UK dates from April 12 to May 1.

FOR FANS OF…



"I definitely wanted to bring that southern vibe to the album," Kris Barras explains, "like Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Allman Brothers. Free and Bad Company were some of my favourites too. But the album that got me into guitar playing was *Wild Frontier* by Gary Moore. That was the record that really opened my ears."

ANDREW KNOWLES/PRESS



TUCKY BUZZARD

Coming On Again, Hispavox, Spain, 1971. £250

Evolving from UK mod/psych legends The End, Tucky Buzzard released five albums during the early 70s. Having had some success in Spain as The End, they relocated there in an attempt to capitalise on that. As a result, not all of their output was released in the UK, including this, their third, which only came out in Spain and Brazil. *Coming On Again* is arguably their finest moment, and is certainly their most adventurous, progressive and sought-after album with a wealth of ideas and instrumentation.

The ambitious opening title track, a suite in six parts covering the whole of side one, moves from heavy Led Zep-style hard blues to Deep Purple-esque keyboard-driven heavy prog, to folk with classical passages and strings, then into dreamy psych and back.

Side two comprises some excellent

'A progressive album with a wealth of ideas and instrumentation.'

and varied tracks. *You're All Alone* is a beautiful and moody progressive number aided by synth/Mellotron interplay. *You Never Will* seems to jump out of nowhere with its contrasting mood. *Free Ticket* has a jazzy groove and features tasteful guitar soloing by Terry 'Tex' Taylor.

As musically diverse as it is, *Coming On Again* never feels like it's drowning in pomposity, having an atmosphere of sincere musicianship throughout, despite being somewhat disjointed in places. Tucky Buzzard released two further albums for Purple Records, before disbanding. **LD**

NEWS

Former **Judas Priest** guitarist KK Downing says he was "shocked and stunned" that the band didn't ask him to rejoin after Glenn Tipton's battle with Parkinson's disease forced him to cease touring with the band. Downing, who left Priest in 2011, says the snub proves he was "unappreciated by more than one member" of the group. In response, vocalist Rob Halford said Downing's claims were "completely superfluous", particularly the "insinuation that [newcomer] Andy Sneap was covering Glenn's guitar parts on the new Priest album *Firepower*".

Drummer **Jason Bonham** (pictured) has been forced by Led Zeppelin's three surviving members to change the name of his touring project Led Zeppelin Experience. The drummer, who has used that name since 2010, has agreed to Jason Bonham's Led Zeppelin Evening.

Procol Harum are to perform their 1971 album *Live: In Concert With The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra* in its entirety, accompanied by a symphony orchestra and chorus at London's Palladium on October 9.

Jonathan Cain says it's time for **Journey** to move on after last year's feud. "At this point, I'll see Neal [Schon, guitarist] at rehearsals for the tour," the keyboard player and guitarist told *Rolling Stone*. "It's like having a fight with your wife. You [still] live in the same house. You have to weather it and overcome it."

WELCOME BACK

Fanny Walked The Earth

Millington sisters Jean and June return with an extended band name and the group's first album since 1974.

In 1970, Fanny were the first all-female rock band to release an album on a major label. Led by Filipino sisters June (guitar, vocals) and Jean (bass, vocals) Millington, the American group made a particular impact in the UK supporting acts including Jethro Tull, Humble Pie and Slade. But five years later it was over. Now they return as Fanny Walked The Earth, with a self-titled album of melodic, soulful rock, and old friend and drummer Brie Darling, who picks up the story.

You all knew each other from high-school band The Svelts?
We were all in high school, but not the same one. June and Jean were looking for a drummer and they found me.

You left that band in 1967 to have a baby, and joined Fanny in 1973.
I played in other bands, but relocated to LA to be with June and Jean. There was a short period when we were a five-piece and I was the lead singer, but management broke that up, wanting more of lead-singerless Beatles band. Then in 1973 June and Alice [de Buhr, drummer] left Fanny and me, and Patti Quatro joined for the last album [*Rock And Roll Survivors*].

That was the band's biggest success.
Yes. It reached number twenty-nine in April 1975. The hit single, *Butter Boy*, was written by Jean about David Bowie [her then-lover]. Bowie would come to our shows and give us advice.

What did everyone do after Fanny disintegrated in 1974?
June, Jean and myself re-formed briefly with early Svelts member Wendy Haas, but we drifted apart. I continued a career as a singer, drummer and percussionist. I did a lot of records and went on a lot of tours; I sang on ELO records, Carole King, Roger Daltrey. I wrote songs that got covered as well. Michael Jackson did one. It's still in the vaults.

In 2016 there was a Fanny reunion that started the ball rolling again.
June was honoured in Massachusetts for her contribution as a woman in music, and she asked me to play some songs. The minute we were together we had the same bond from the sixties but with fifty years of experience as musicians. Afterwards a woman in the audience posted a clip of us online, and the president of our label saw it and wanted to sign us up.

"The new name speaks of the dinosaurs that we are."

There are a lot of women on the new album, *Fanny Walked The Earth*.
This record is all about supporting women. When we were recording, Sherry Hagler, who played in Birtha, contacted us and said: "If you ever need a keyboard player…" It snowballed into us inviting women who played before us to record, and also women who followed us – Cherie Currie from The Runaways, Kathy Valentine from The Go-Gos, and Susanna Hoffs, Vicki Peterson and Debbi Peterson from The Bangles.

Why the change of band name?
June didn't want to return to performing as Fanny again. So we swapped names around a table and she said, jokingly: "Fanny Walked The Earth". I said: "I love that. It speaks of the dinosaurs that we are. Let's embrace that." **JK**

Fanny Walked The Earth is out now via Blue Elan.

JASON BONHAM: NEIL ZLOZOWER/PRESS

WorldMags.net

RAW POWER

Warren Piece

A slice of true 1980s hair-metal history returns.

During the mid-80s, Ratt were absolutely massive. Musically more accomplished than many of their contemporaries, and boasting a vocalist in Stephen Pearcy whose delivery was, shall we say, unique, their ace in the hole was – and remains – guitarist Warren DiMartini. His quicksilver runs and technical style were unmistakeable, and in a world where Eddie Van Halen was the undisputed God of Guitar™ it took a great deal for any other guitarist to even be mentioned in the same breath. However, Martini had it in spades, and his guitars of choice came from the lauded San Dimas, California woodshop of Wayne Charvel.

Today's incarnation of Charvel Guitars nestles under the expansive corporate umbrella of Fender MIC, and both the Snakeskin and Crossed Swords models famous from Ratt's peak period are stalwarts of the DiMartini Signature Series. He still uses loads of Charvels both old and new, and in mid-2017 another of his classic axes saw the light of day: the Frenchie.

The Gallic nomenclature comes from the inscription 'Trop vite de vivre, trop jeune de mourire' that accents the Dinky alder body. A translation of the iconic James Dean quote 'Too fast to live, too young to die', it's surely emblematic of Ratt's raison d'être in their heyday. Pickups comprise a Seymour Duncan DiMartini RTM humbucker in the bridge and, in a departure from the spec of the original, a Quarter Pounder single-coil in the neck position.

The quartersawn maple neck is super-smooth thanks to a hand-rubbed urethane gel finish, while the compound radius and stainless steel jumbo frets ensure it's ultra-playable too. The obligatory double-locking Floyd Rose whammy tops everything off and the entire guitar drips in quality.

It sounds incredible too, and at just over $4,000 (around £3,365) this is a proper rock guitar more than worthy of a truly wonderful musician.

More from www.charvel.com

Simon Bradley

GETTY

JERSEY ROAR

The guitars that ruled the world. At least for a while.

Kramer Guitars became a genuine alternative to the all-conquering Jackson/Charvel stable for some seriously huge 80s rockers. Founded in Neptune, New Jersey in 1976 by MI stalwarts Dennis Berardi and Gary Kramer, the company first made waves by producing instruments that had aluminium necks, and by the time the hairspray had begun to waft in from Los Angeles they'd already signed up the biggest name of the era, Eddie Van Halen, whose custom '5150' guitar was based on the Kramer Baretta.

Kramer also produced both Richie Sambora's first signature model, and the awesome Nightswan developed by Vivian Campbell (pictured) during his time with Whitesnake. Another innovation was The Sustainer, whose ingenious pickup gave notes infinite sustain, and the utterly crazy Ripley stereo guitar, heard on the intro to Van Halen's *Top Jimmy*. So much great music from the time owes its power to Kramer.

WorldMags.net

Sharp Dressed Man
Rock 'n' Roll accessories

This month, @jamiehibbard is elegantly wasted in these three sartorial stand-outs.

AMI wool collar denim jacket
Parisian label AMI have put together this awesome refined edition of their classic denim jacket, with the addition of a shearling wool collar (which is removable). It's got something of a boxy cut, and a vintage wash that gives it a well-worn look.
£309 @AMIParis
AMIParis.com

Nanamica Coolmax stripe long-sleeve tee
No one pulled off a striped top quite as well as Kurt Cobain, but if you want to get in on the retro grunge look then Japan's Nanamica are here to help. This long-sleeve T has been crafted from technical Coolmax jersey, so its quick-drying, breathable capabilities will keep you comfy through sweaty gigs all night long.
£85 @Nanamica_Tokyo
Nanamica.com

Y-3 Bashyo
It's not easy buying trainers as a rock fan, but if you're willing to deviate from the well-trodden Vans/Converse path you can find some good other options out there. Take these high-tops from the Adidas Y-3 range with Yohji Yamamoto, which fuse many forward-thinking touches in an under-the-radar way.
£249 @AdidasY3
Adidas.co.uk/Y-3

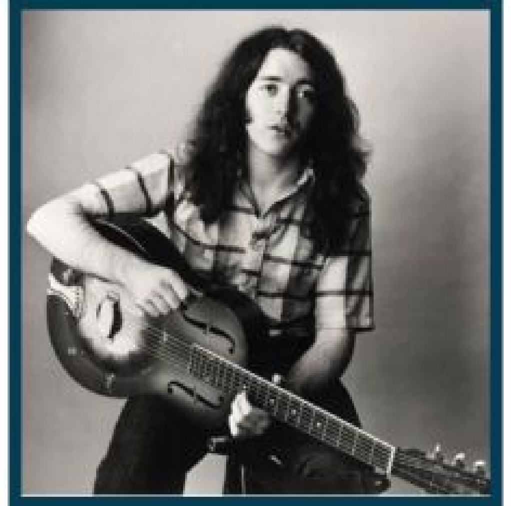
NEWS

Jeff Beck has been added to the bill of the Live At Chelsea Concert Series. The multi-Grammy-winning guitarist appears at the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London on June 15.

Muse frontman **Matt Bellamy** believes that guitars have become a "textural instrument not a lead instrument." Talking to the BBC, Bellamy also voiced the opinion that traditional rock bands with guitar, bass and drums have "one foot in the past".

A new concert set from **Joe Bonamassa** is released on May 18 via Mascot Group. *British Blues Explosion Live*, a tribute to the music of Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page, was filmed at the Greenwich Music Time Festival in London in the summer of 2016. It's available on CD, DVD, Blu-ray and in triple-vinyl (red, white and blue).

Most of **Rory Gallagher**'s (pictured) album catalogue was reissued on March 16, the day that the guitarist who died in 1995 would have turned 70 years old. With a handful of exceptions, the albums were available again in remastered form on CD and 180-gram vinyl LP.



Manic Street Preachers, **Deftones**, **Mogwai**, **My Bloody Valentine**, **Nine Inch Nails**, **Placebo**, **The Psychedelic Furs** and **The Libertines** are all to perform at this summer's Meltdown festival on London's South Bank from June 15–24. Now in its 25th year, 2018's event is curated by Robert Smith of The Cure.

WELCOME BACK

Kino

The not-prog, not-a-supergroup pop-prog supergroup return with *Radio Voltaire* after more than a decade away.

IT'S BEEN 13 years since neo-prog supergroup Kino called it a day after just one album. But creativity got the better of them, and John Mitchell (Lonely Robot, It Bites), Pete Trewavas (Marillion) and (now guesting on the new album) John Beck (It Bites) are back, with Craig Blundell (Steven Wilson) on drums. Influenced by Moulin Rouge, vaudeville and 18th-century philosophical wit Voltaire, *Radio Voltaire* is brimming with vast, catchy prog-pop epics – or, as Mitchell describes them, "pop songs we've messed about with".

You've all been busy with your own projects. What was it that pulled you back to Kino?
I spend so much time producing other bands, I wanted to not sit in the studio listening to angry twenty-one-year-olds screaming! Over the last few years I've been excited doing my own thing, and on a roll writing music. I had these ideas, but Thomas [Waber, InsideOut Records] told me it was too soon to do another Lonely Robot record, and asked if I'd thought about working with Pete [Trewavas] again.

Things didn't go as planned the first time with Kino; I was more naive about how things worked back then, and I thought everyone would be fully committed. I was downhearted when they weren't. So I'd put Kino to the back of my mind. But Pete happened to be free, so we just reconvened where we left off.

You describe Kino's music as "pop songs we've messed around with". Can you elaborate?
First of all, I'm allergic to the word 'prog'. Not because I'm trying to be cool, but there's a swathe of prog-rock bands who do all this nonsense technically and there's no sign of a song anywhere. All my favourite so-called prog bands always started with a decent song first, and elongated it. A lot of people think prog rock is just sounding like Genesis from 1972. I grew up listening to bands like The Police, and I think the chorus is still king.

> **"I'm allergic to the word 'prog'... I think the chorus is still king."**

What were some of your musical and thematic inspirations for the album?
For some reason, when I was making it I watched *Bugsy Malone* about sixteen times. A lot of that kind of cheeky-chappiness rubbed off on this record – there are some parts that are kind of vaudeville in places.

There's no concept to the album. Pete wrote his lyrics and I wrote mine, and I only have a rough idea of what Pete's lyrics are about. *The Silent Fighter Pilot* is about my great-uncle Sidney, who ran out of petrol in his aeroplane and died. *The Dead Club* is about somebody I know who was quite desperate to become famous. It's all fairly lighthearted, I suppose – well, apart from the song about my uncle.

I became very interested in Voltaire, too. He was a French philosopher and was very liberal and forward-thinking for his time. I thought it would be fun to call the album *Radio Voltaire* because it's like a radio station for people who don't want to listen to bullshit!

Prog has a lot of 'supergroups'. What makes Kino stand out?
I don't think of us as a supergroup, but I guess it depends whether you're doing it because you want to put bums on seats or if you just enjoy making the music. You can't treat music like a football team. I've got a fantastic group with John, Craig and Pete, and hopefully that comes across in the music. **HK**

Radio Voltaire is out now via InsideOut.

WorldMags.net

> "The marriage we wanted was The Beatles on a peyote buzz."

★ HIGH HOPES

Demob Happy

Meet the Newcastle/Brighton trio marrying fuzzy guitars with 60s-tastic harmonies.

THE PLACE WE catch up with Demob Happy has proper rock history: the London property rented by Beatle Ringo Starr in 1965. Ringo would go on to lease it to Paul McCartney (who demoed *Eleanor Rigby* here), Jimi Hendrix (who wrote *The Wind Cries Mary* while resident) and John Lennon (who took rock's most infamous selfie in the basement, used on the cover for his *Two Virgins* album). Demob Happy are on the sofa, playing a short set of songs from their second album, *Holy Doom*.

Formed at Newcastle College a decade ago, the band were originally influenced by everything from 60s pop to Screamo, from hardcore punk to Pink Floyd and the Blues Brothers. And it all came together in a way you wouldn't expect.

"We were playing ten-minute songs with fifteen different sections," says bassist/frontman Matt Marcantonio. "Kind of blues prog with an underpinning of Led Zeppelin. It was pretty interesting stuff, but there wasn't really anyone else like us in Newcastle. We were ambitious, but without that we couldn't really build a scene."

So they relocated to Brighton, and began to carve out a profile.

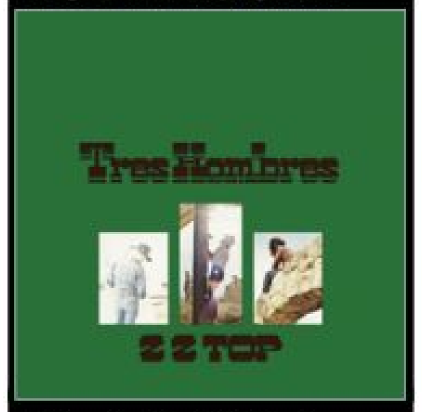
Debut album *Dream Soda* came along in 2015. It was an effervescent mix of all the best bits of grunge, a collection of songs with Nirvana riffs and Soundgarden choruses. *CR*'s review said the band were a candidate for the "prime breakthrough act of the British grunge revival". Then it all began to fall apart. They endured a year of misery – anxiety, depression and other personal stuff – and were reduced from a quartet to a trio (alongside Marcantonio are guitarist Adam Godfrey and drummer Thomas Armstrong) and set about making album number two.

Holy Doom still features Godfrey's buzz-saw guitar, but it's less grunge-by-numbers than its predecessor, and all the better for it. The Seattle sound has been swapped out for something that appears to have been piped in from Abbey Road in the late 1960s: rich harmonies, big, singalong choruses and psychedelia. The Beatles are here; single *Be Your Man* sounds like *Come Together* remade by Status Quo before the boogie took hold. So are Canned Heat. And it's a bunch of fun.

"I remember reading an interview with David Bowie where he said you always have to push yourself into uncomfortable places," says Marcantonio. "We've done that. It might not be normal for rock bands to care so much about melody, but it's the absolute number-one priority for us. Early on, when we were jamming ideas for the album, there was a bit that sounded like The Beatles. But it was different: instead of going to India and hanging out with the Maharishi and smoking weed, we'd gone to the desert with some fuzz pedals and were hanging out with Josh Homme. And that was the marriage we wanted: The Beatles on a peyote buzz." **FL**

Holy Doom is out now via SO Recordings. Demob Happy tour the UK on from April 6 to 15.

FOR FANS OF...



"Sonically, ZZ Top's *Tres Hombres* was a blueprint for our album," says Marcantonio. "It has a really dry kick sound, and the guitars are really present. They're distorted, but in an early-seventies way, so they're not *too* distorted. And then there's the writing and the riffs. *Precious And Grace* is just a great song."

Heavy Rotation

What we've been listening to this month

1 Standing On The Edge Of Tomorrow
The Damned

Haunted by the ghost of Joe Meek, here's a single – from their latest, Tony Visconti-produced album *Evil Spirits* – that stands up with the very best of the band's back catalogue. Part *Wait For The Blackout*, part-*Eloise*, all ear worm, with repetitive hooks to die for, it's a shoo-in for any future 'greatest hits' package.

2 In Eternity
Manic Street Preachers

More celebration than elegy, this vivid memorial to David Bowie (from *Resistance Is Futile*) is jam-packed with Bowie-pastiche flourishes, from stack-heeled glam guitar riffs to icy synthesiser textures. Paying tribute in broad, arena-rocking brush strokes, the Manics are hardly subtle, but they are commendably ballsy.

3 Lonely Road
Rick Parfitt

From Rick's posthumous new *Over And Out*, an excellent album that touches many bases, this track is closest to Frantic Four Quo. A heads-down, 12-bar stomp that steps up a gear midway through, it would have fitted perfectly on Quo's *Piledriver*.

4 So Much Is Lost
Paradise Lost

Paradise Lost's shift from heavy doom to dark-wave synthpop with 1999's *Host* didn't please everyone, but as opener *So Much Is Lost* shows it's a unique and mesmerising take on their gothic gloom.

5 Hail Mary
Kris Barras Band

Mixing bluesy southern twangs, soulful female backing vocals and big hard rock riffs, *Hail Mary* encapsulates perfectly the Devon-based Kris Barras Band and their brand of blues rock.

6 Nobody Gives A Damn
Blackberry Smoke

Part Georgia Satellites' *Keep Your Hands To Yourself*, part AC/DC in Stetsons, this is the shit-kicking yang to the pensively lonesome yin of the Atlanta five-piece. Check out more southern-baked treats on their new album *Find A Light*.

7 Revelation
Danny Bryant

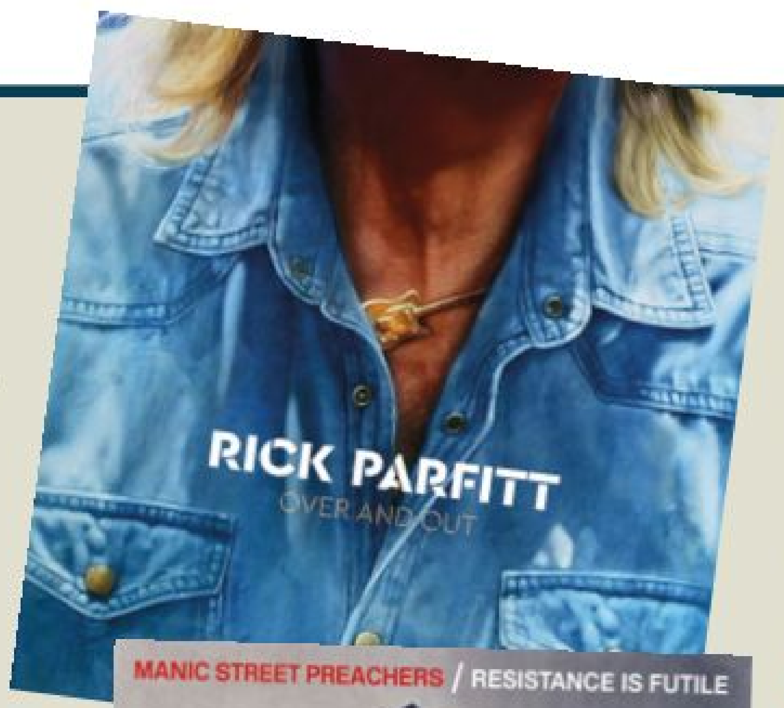
The *Revelation* album is one long primal scream, and Bryant never sounds more bereft than on the doomy title track that salutes his beloved father. It's the truest of blues, wrenched from the depths.

8 Your Mind And We Belong Together (Forever Changes reissue)
Love

This post-*Forever Changes* single signalled the end game for the original Love. On this reissue addition Arthur Lee (now producing) inspires guitarist Johnny Echols to echo his operatic lament with a mind-blowing psychedelic solo.

9 All Night Long
Thee Hypnotics

On the In A Trance Early Daze rarities disc from Thee Hypnotics' *Righteously Recharged Beggars Arkive* four-CD box, we find the Stooges/MC5-channeling B-side of their über-psych debut *Love In A Different Vein* seven-inch. A Cry Baby wah-wah firefight of raw and unfettered libertine excess.



Preacher man: The Manics' Nicky Wire.

10 Bad City Woman
Perfect Plan

The opening track of a stellar debut album called *All Rise, Bad City Woman* melds the urgency of nu-breed Scandi-AOR with the classic stylings of melodic hard rock's heyday-era.

11 My Insatiable One (Piano Version)
Suede

Stripped back to its finely chiselled bones, and rescued from the lost obscurity of *The Drowners* CD single's B-side, this exquisite keyboards-and-vocals version of one of the Britpop catalyst's glammest moments can be found as an additional attraction on Suede's massively expanded eponymous debut album.

12 Easter, Live At La Cigale 29/4/1994 (2018 Michael Hunter Remix)
Marillion

A lovingly enriched remix of a band in full flight – and never better, in a track that typifies just how inventive and full of grace the Steve Hogarth-era Marillion could be.

13 On This Battlefield
Wilson & Wakeman

A tender acoustic moment for the super-duo, who leave behind the intensity of their prog-metal band Headspace for this heart-rending break-up ballad. Pass the man-size Kleenex, please...

14 I Wanna Be Your Man
The Rezillos

Doing for the B-side of The Rezillos' Sensible Records debut *I Can't Stand My Baby* exactly what the cover of *Help* did for the flip-side of The Damned's *New Rose*, this rampant slice of amphetamine-steeped Lennon/McCartney aggression (newly rescued by label Cherry Red) reveals The Beatles to be as much punk's architects as its pariahs.

15 Stronger
FM

This is where FM tap into their Deep Purple roots. *Stronger* is powerful and has real thrust, but the band don't forsake their love for sumptuous melody in the process. One of the stand-out tracks on *Atomic Generation*.

16 Isn't Life Strange
The Moody Blues

While the band deliver the whole of *Days Of Future Passed* on this live performance, this track – not part of that iconic record – offers a moment of pure Moodies magic. This is where you feel their haunting depth.

17 Breath Taking
Holger Czukay (with Karlheinz Stockhausen)

Cinema takes in the extraordinary, impish genius of the late Can bassist Czukay. Among its previously unreleased treasures is *Breath Taking*, revolving around a vocal sample of his mentor Karlheinz Stockhausen, an awestruck swirl of contemplative ambient.

18 Want Some
Monster Magnet

Acid-for-blood guitars, dripping haunted-house vibes and thwocking cowbell run the game on *Mindfucker*'s dopest-to-infinity deep cut. A shameless *Space Lord* redux with a shiny new chrome finish.

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Kansas

Dust In The Wind

A melody that came from practising guitar, a lyric inspired by a book of Native American poetry and loaded with biblical allusions... Together they became a song that would be a multimillion-selling classic.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

KANSAS IN THE DOCK

One of the more curious legacies of *Dust In The Wind* was its inclusion in a list of "lyrically questionable" songs drawn up by Clear Channel Communications in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The US media giant's memorandum, suggesting that TV and radio stations avoid playing certain tracks, objected to the song's literal depiction of people returning to the earth as dust.

"By 2001, that song had been written nearly twenty-five years previously, so it was a dubious decision," says Phil Ehart. "But we understood. It turned out to be a little too literal for their tastes."

You often don't recognise a good thing when you've got it. In the case of Kansas guitarist Kerry Livgren, idly strumming a melody he'd come up with at home in the summer of 1977, it took his wife to point out its potential.

"It began as an exercise that Kerry was doing, to learn how to fingerpick the acoustic guitar," explains Kansas drummer and percussionist Phil Ehart. "He had the chords, and his wife, Vicci, kept walking by him and saying: 'Y'know, you ought to make that into a song. It could be a great one.' He kinda brushed her off, but she was persistent."

After picking up a book of Native American poetry, Livgren came across a line that resonated strongly on a very personal level: "All we are is dust in the wind." This reminded him of the biblical passage from *Ecclesiastes* that states: "All is vanity," which in turn led him to write a lyric that addressed the ephemeral nature of life. *Dust In The Wind* was duly finished in just 15 minutes. Livgren put the song down as a demo on a tiny four-track tape machine and took it with him to the next band rehearsal.

Even then, perhaps due to its lilting, acoustic tone – not something with which the hard-driving Kansas were overly familiar – Livgren was slightly reluctant to share the song with his bandmates. It was only when producer Jeff Glixman asked if they had anything new that Livgren piped up and said he had something.

"We were working on the songs for *Point Of Know Return*," Ehart explains, "and he said: 'Guys, I've brought a song and it's kind of different. It doesn't have any drums or bass.' He had this little reel-to-reel that he'd recorded it on. We listened to it and all of us were just blown away. Kerry goes: 'You mean you guys *like* it?'

"I remember either Rich [Williams, guitarist] or Steve [Walsh, lead singer/organist] going: 'Man, that's a *hit*! That's the kind of song you'd hear on the radio.' I'll never forget how surprised Kerry was by the reaction."

"We just knew it was a one-listen song," continues Ehart. "It was only three-and-a-half minutes, and the melody was so beautiful. Then when Steve started singing, it was like: 'Oh God, this is incredible!' So we had to get it arranged, with the middle section and the violins and everything."

The result was one of Kansas's most delicate tracks, a rumination on the vacuity of fame from a band who had risen from small-town hopefuls to one of America's biggest new attractions. Over the softly chiming guitars of Livgren and Williams, Walsh's vocals inhabit the ballad with a rare vulnerability, while Robby Steinhardt's violin brings an extra strand of emotion.

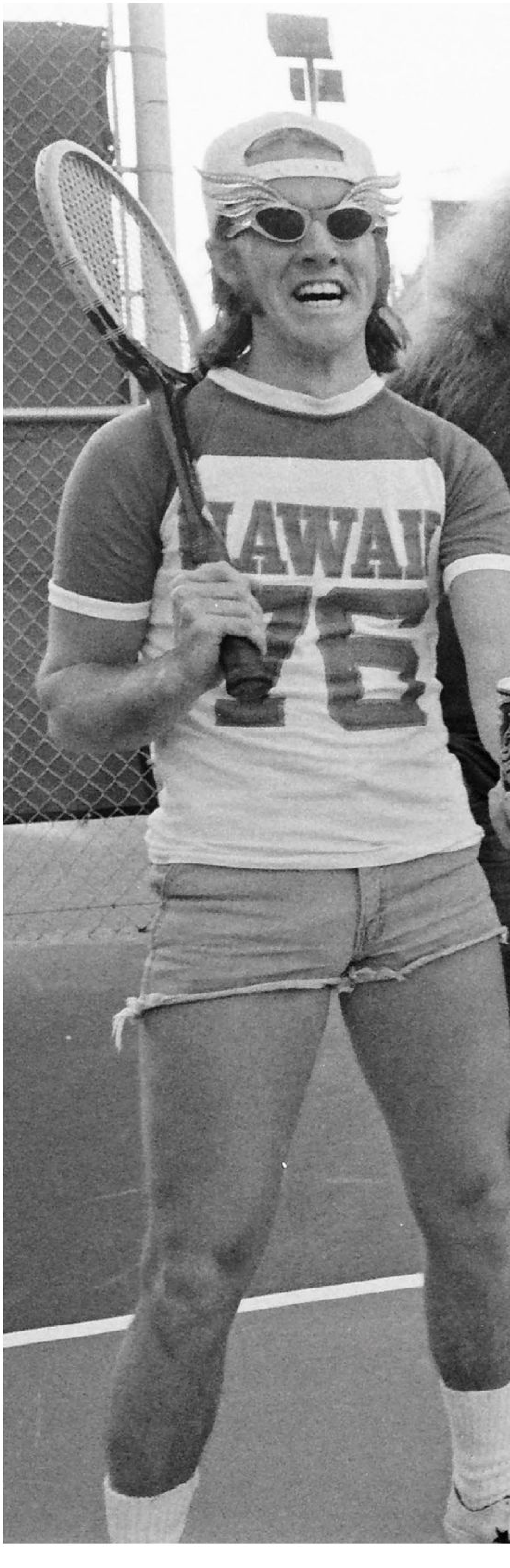
Loaded with biblical allusions, *Dust In The Wind* was something of a pre-echo of Livgren's conversion to Christianity two years later.

"Kerry was always searching and writing about stuff," says Ehart. "We'd kind of look at the lyrics and go: 'Okay, I have no idea what this is about, so let's just go ahead and do it.'

"You have to remember that we went to high school with Kerry and we were in college together too. He was from Topeka, like we were. It's a small town, and we were all such good friends. Whatever any one of us wanted to do, then that was fine. We had that openness in the band, so it was a logical place for him to end up."

Livgren would concentrate on issues of faith after he quit the band in 1983 and began a career as a solo artist. For the time being, though, Kansas were peaking as a commercial proposition. Released in early '78, *Dust In The Wind* was an even bigger hit (reaching No.6 in the US) than the previous year's *Carry On Wayward Son*.

"It was a fantastic song to work on," Ehart recalls. "But what we didn't realise was that it was going to go across so many different radio formats – they played it on FM, rock, AM and country music radio. We didn't realise it was going to be a smash hit around the world."



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The song's parent album achieved huge sales too. Like its predecessor *Leftoverture*, *Point Of Know Return* went multi-platinum in the States. Before long, Kansas were filling the largest arenas in North America, including a sell-out show at New York's Madison Square Garden.

"A few years earlier we'd been a club band in Topeka, playing biker bars, rodeos and high-school dances," Ehart says. "Then all of a sudden, boom, we're headlining stadiums. It happened with such force that you get swept along with it. There was huge momentum at that point. It was because of radio, which was very

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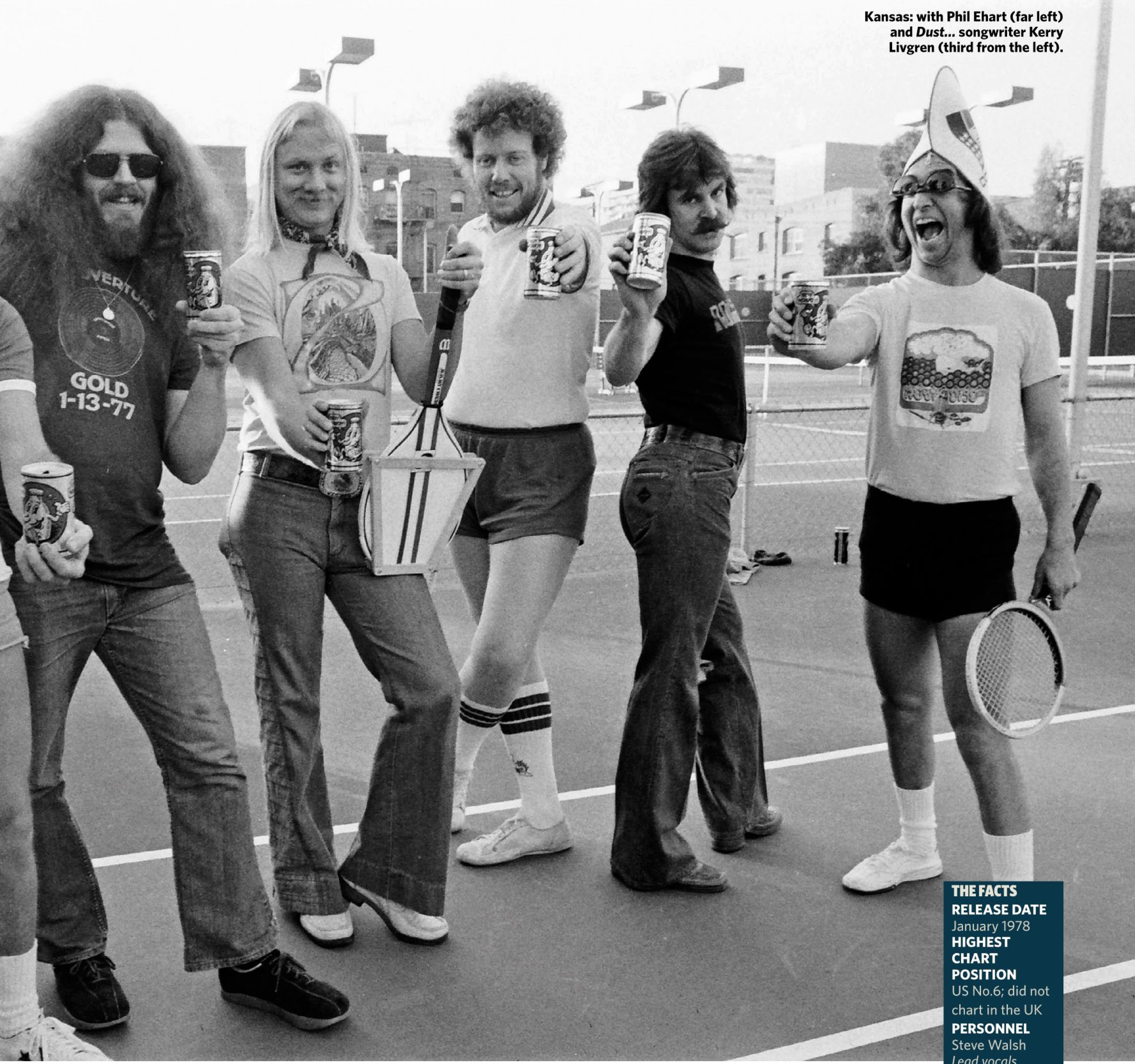

Kansas: with Phil Ehart (far left) and *Dust...* songwriter Kerry Livgren (third from the left).

influential back then. Journey, Rush, Styx, Foreigner, Boston, Chicago, Santana, they were all there. It was an incredible time to be a musician."

Dust In The Wind has since been covered by such disparate artists as Brian May, Sarah Brightman and the Scorpions. For Ehart, the only original member who still records and tours with Kansas, the song continues to hold an enduring appeal.

"It means so much to so many people. Before email came along, we used to get so many fan letters about that song. We still get requests all the time, like: 'Will you guys come and sing *Dust In The Wind* at my dad's funeral?' or whatever. We have to politely turn them down, of course. We're not really a funeral band."

Ehart adds: "If you think about the two songs that Kansas are best known for, *Carry On Wayward Son* and *Dust In The Wind*, both of which Kerry wrote, they're timeless. They just seem to stick around. Which is good for us. They still get a huge reception every night at our shows.

"Those big songs come along only once in a while. I'd put *Dust In The Wind* up there with any of the greatest ballads that have ever been written. You can't replicate it. It happens in that moment in time and you capture that magic, then it's gone."

"I'd put *Dust In The Wind* up there with any of the greatest ballads that have ever been written. You can't replicate it."

THE FACTS
RELEASE DATE
January 1978
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
US No.6; did not chart in the UK
PERSONNEL
Steve Walsh
Lead vocals
Kerry Livgren
Acoustic guitar, harmony vocals
Robby Steinhardt
Harmony vocals, violin, viola
Rich Williams
Acoustic guitar
Phil Ehart
Percussion
WRITTEN BY
Kerry Livgren
PRODUCED BY
Jeff Glixman and Kansas
LABEL
Kirshner

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Charlie Starr

The Blackberry Smoke singer/guitarist on brawls, Beefheart, Skynyrd and how "everything that I enjoy is bad for you".

Words: **Polly Glass** Portrait: **John McMurtrie**

There's more to Charlie Starr than Lynyrd Skynyrd connections, spectacular mutton chops and the most gloriously southern voice this side of 1977.

Since his Baptist childhood in Lanett, Alabama, the singer/guitarist born Charles Gray has absorbed a vibrant feast of sounds including bluegrass, metal, rock'n'roll, punk and gospel. Hints of this wide range of influences are streamlined into a rich, textured southern brew on his band Blackberry Smoke's new sixth album, *Find A Light*, for which Starr has written some of his most commanding, emotionally engaging material. "There's only so many party songs you can write," he says, "so it seems interesting to try to be a bit more complex."

Starr quit alcohol in favour of caffeine and nicotine 11 years ago, has two children (aged four and 21) and lives in Atlanta with his wife, their vintage camper and a robust collection of guitars.

Find A Light **captures complex, often quite bittersweet emotions. To what extent do the songs you write reflect your own experiences?**
Sometimes you're writing from experience and sometimes you're playing a part. Or trying to detect how someone else might be feeling. It's something that I've grown to love more than I used to, trying to be a little more complicated… *Flesh And Bone*, I guess you could say that's about everyone as we get older, and you start to realise: "Jesus Christ, everything that I enjoy is bad for you." That's a cruel joke of the cosmos: "Why can't I eat this, drink this, snort this?" y'know? Everything that's good for you seems to suck. But that's part of getting older, I guess.

Back in your partying days what were your poisons of choice?
Oh, everything. I don't know what I was trying to escape from. I don't really have a sob story that led me to any of that. I enjoyed it, I enjoyed being fucked up all the time. But I was just someone that wasn't good at it and pissed everybody off all the time and was constantly apologising – or not. I just woke up one day and said: "I'm done. I can't do this any more. I'm right at thirty and I feel fifty." And then good things started to happen. I told my wife years ago: "When I get old, and I'm too old to get into trouble, then maybe we'll have a glass of bourbon," but until then I think I'll just do my thing.

You seem like a very together guy these days. When was the last time you got into a fight or a bar brawl?
Well the last bar brawl was probably in 2001 or 2002, and I went to the hospital and got stitches. It was ugly. That was in a tiny little bar in Georgia, and it was a two-night stand. We were playing four sets a night – we were just a bar band earning our stripes at that point. It was a big, nasty fight. There was a misunderstanding on the first night, if you will, and Brit [Turner, drums] wound up jumping on this dude at the bar who was hitting on his girlfriend at the time, who's now his wife.

How did it end?
That all ended up well enough – the guy was taken out. And then the next night he showed up with five or six of his friends, and they jumped on all of us. It was a bar-clearing brawl, and we got fired from the gig. I wrote a song about that whole incident on *The Whippoorwill* called *Sleeping Dogs*. A funny thing about writing songs, and poetic licence, is that you can write in the song that you *won* the fight… But that one was bad. We were lucky nobody got killed.

What do you have in your record collection that might surprise people?
I love the Beach Boys. My mother instilled that in me. It's the harmony thing that's always been very important to me musically, whether it's the Beach Boys, bluegrass or gospel harmonies. And I love Captain Beefheart. He's so out-there and different. His *Trout Mask Replica* album is extremely avant-garde, so most people would think it's just noise. And it is. Not everyone could get away with that.

Richard [Turner, Blackberry Smoke bassist] and Brit played in a metal band, Nihilist, in the eighties. Did you go through a similarly heavy phase?
I got into very heavy stuff when I was younger. I was very into Metallica and Megadeth and Slayer. I still love that stuff. And I got into a punk phase, and The Replacements – their earlier stuff that was really rough, garage kinda music. And Bad Brains, Minor Threat and the DC hardcore stuff. I found Bad Brains' first record, a vinyl copy, not long ago and came home and put it on. It was early in the morning and my wife was like: "What the hell are you doing?!"

The part of the world that you come from is steeped in the Bible. Where do you stand religiously these days?
I believe in God. The way you might describe God differs from person to person, but when you add organised religion, the human element, into the equation, that's when it gets complicated. I don't think they've established a denomination that I'm a hundred per cent with.

Later this year, Blackberry Smoke will be performing live with Lynyrd Skynyrd, who are playing their final shows before retiring from touring.
It seems really bittersweet, the end of the touring band Lynyrd Skynyrd. Gary Rossington is the sole surviving member of the original band, as it were. I guess maybe he's tired of the road. And he's had a lot of health problems over the years. I bet it'll be an emotional time for fans and the band alike.

It'll be quite something, Skynyrd playing *Sweet Home Alabama* in Alabama for the final time.
Oh yeah, that's very powerful. They play that song at sporting events down there, and it's incredible to hear. In America, specifically in the south, college football is massively popular. The University of Alabama are the national champions again this year, and their stadium holds about 105,000 people, and to hear that many people singing *Sweet Home Alabama* is something to behold.

Find A Light is released on April 6 via Earache. Blackberry Smoke tour the UK from November 2 to 17.

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> “I was very into Metallica and Megadeth and Slayer. I still love that stuff.”

Charlie Starr: leaving the party songs behind in favour of “something a bit more complex”.

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6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Turbowolf

Who else could play with Korn *and* The Subways, other than four wild, free spirits from Bristol?

Words: **Emma Johnston**

It's not easy to dive into the pool of old-school rock'n'roll without drowning in retro cliché, but, thanks to adding a heavy dose of psychedelia, metal, punk, blues and electronica and plenty more genres as well, Bristol's Turbowolf have managed to pull off that trick.

"We're not revivalists," explains moustachioed frontman Chris Georgiadis. "We're looking forward more than anything. There's so many artists that have made great rock records, but they've already made them. There's no point trying to recreate that. We're trying to stand out and do something different. That's what drives us, that's our passion, trying to find things that haven't been done."

But just what makes independent-minded adventurers Turbowolf tick?

They will, they will rock you

Turbowolf's live shows are wild and, inspired by the likes of Freddie Mercury ("one of the greatest frontmen and singers ever"), Axl Rose, David Lee Roth, The Cramps and Blondie, they're on a mission to bring back the art of the rock star, on stage if not off.

"You're either cool because you're moody and cool, or you're cool because you're way out there and lairy," says Georgiadis. "Way out there and lairy is just the way we went. It's just a feeling when I go out on the stage; I'm not this person that you're speaking to now, I'm somebody different. I can only reach that side of me if I'm in that environment. I'm so lucky to have that expression and that time to let go and be someone else for an hour."

They're uniting the tribes

Having toured with artists ranging from Death From Above 1979 to Korn, Turbowolf have spread the word far and wide, and the band's fan base is as diverse as their sound.

"We're so lucky to have such great fans from all walks of life," says the singer. "What that means is someone that comes to see us play with the Subways or Death From Above, or Korn, will all meet up in one room when they come to see us play a headline show. And that's a really interesting vibe. I think that's fantastic. Not only does everyone get along, it's great looking out into the crowd and thinking we've brought all these people together from all different places. You look how you like, music is music. Get out there and enjoy it, it's for everybody."

Bristol made its mark

Being based in Bristol has given the band the chance to hone their craft in a supportive scene.

"We have some really great clubs and bars that we've been able to play in coming up in the scene here. There's a lot happening, a lot of dance music here and a lot of punk rock. There's genres being mixed by bands, so it's quite an exciting place."

They're keeping things mysterious

Georgiadis avoids going into specifics about the songs and their meanings, preferring to leave them open to interpretation. But there is clearly an esoteric side to their songwriting.

"We're very interested in the world and in the things you can't necessarily see or hear," he explains. "We're very filtered as a species, we can only see and hear so many frequencies. I think people will find that on the record if they're looking for it. But you don't have to, it's not a prerequisite of enjoying our band."

Everyone is welcome on their records

New album *The Free Life* has loads of guest singers, including Sebastien Grainger of Death From Above 1979 – heroes of the band, who they befriended after supporting them on tour – Mike Kerr of Royal Blood, Joe Talbot of Idles and Chantal Brown of Vôdûn.

"We always like to get our mates involved in what we do," says Georgiadis. "It gets a bit boring having my voice droning on through the whole album, so it's nice to mix it up a bit."

They have wild ideas for the future

Their live shows remain at the heart of what Turbowolf do, but if they manage to get to the point where money is no object, expect things to really kick off.

"It would be quite strange, we're quite up for fucking with the audience quite a lot," Georgiadis says. "Just for our own amusement. So we'd probably take it to the extreme and no one would ever come and see us again. We'd probably have a lot of props on the stage. It'd be like mardi gras but rock'n'roll."

The Free Life is available now via So Recordings.

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A WILD RIDE OVER STONY GROUND

Eleven studio albums, 26 UK hit singles, more than 100 million records sold; one near-fatal car crash, one tragic death... This, and so much more, is the story of the first 40 years of **Def Leppard**.

Words: **Mick Wall** Photos: **Ross Halfin**

He's late. Which is unusual. In the four decades I've known him, Joe Elliott has always been the total professional – even when he's been hurting inside. But today, well, hey, he overslept. It's still early morning in London and he's just starting what will be a 12-hour day of interviews and promo and whatnot. After years of holding out against the digital tide, Def Leppard finally allowed their entire back catalogue to be available for streaming. The result has seen classic five-star Leppard landmarks like *Pyromania* and, in particular, *Hysteria*, fly straight to the top of charts all over the globe.

"We held out so long because the deal we had with our original label, Mercury, was at a time when CDs hadn't even been invented, let alone the idea of making all your music available to your phone," he explains. "We didn't even have mobile phones back then. So when our record deal ended [in 2009] we were able to decide what we wanted to do ourselves without pressure from anyone. But we were constantly on the road touring, people were still buying CDs and we just didn't really address the whole thing until the last couple of years."

So here he is this morning, in an old T-shirt, bleary, just out of bed. But he still looks a decade younger than his age, 58. Still has that dirty-blond dye in his longish straight hair, which suits him more than his natural smoke-dark hair. Still has hair, more to the point.

We have coffee, and he spoons a mountain of sugar into big cup of cappuccino. He chats about a piece he and Rick Savage just shot for *The One Show* – for which they went back to the tiny room in the Sheffield spoon factory where they used to rehearse as teens – performing an acoustic version of *Pour Some Sugar On Me*. It's a listed building, so the outside remains the same. But inside it's been renovated over the years. "It's a very arty place now, people making clothes, painters, stuff like that. But when I looked out the window it's like I'd been transported back to 1978."

Which is a good place to start. How old were you when you left Sheffield?

Twenty-one. I packed up a suitcase and a box of stuff, and I moved to London after the *On Through The Night* tour. But I'd kinda left home [already], because when we went on tour I was gone. I needed my own place by then. I'd made an album, for God's sake.

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"We're gonna be big!" Even in the very early days they were full of confidence.

You moved into a flat in London that belonged to one-time Leppard drummer Frank Noon that you later described as "a frat house".
It was fantastic. There was me, Bernie Tormé, Frank, Colin Bond who played bass [for Stampede]. It was a bedsit, basically. A hundred and thirty pounds a month.

How old were you when you started to see real money coming in?
We were on thirty pounds a week even up to *Pyromania*, when we were selling out arenas. When I was living in Isleworth with my girlfriend we were both signing on. Once we were on tour we got a hundred dollars a week. You wonder how anyone ever got pissed.

I remember we were in Las Vegas in September 1983, and I actually finally went out and bought a video camera because I wanted to record some of this stuff. It cost five hundred pounds. I had to get [Leppard manager] Peter Mensch to advance me it – and we'd sold six million albums by then.

Even though Leppard became associated with the NWOBHM era – specifically through your coverage in *Sounds* magazine – your musical influences actually had very little to do with metal. You were a major Bowie fan, you loved Queen, Rod Stewart, Elton John…
Yes. My favourite Bowie period was from *Space Oddity* to *Diamond Dogs*, because it was glam rock. Mott The Hoople was another band I loved. When Queen came in and Bowie went to what he called his 'plastic soul' period with *Young Americans*, I loved that record but I was playing more Queen now. Maybe I just gravitate to bands. The gang factor, you know. I mean, the first two gigs I ever saw were T.Rex and the Faces. Chalk and cheese but awesome! I was eleven or twelve. The next gig I saw was Hunter-Ronson, March seventy-five. I was sixteen. It was amazing. From that moment onwards I went to just about every gig at the [Sheffield] City Hall – Sparks, Roxy, Skynyrd, Lizzy, Budgie. Rush's first ever gig in the UK was at Sheffield. One week I saw Styx followed by The Clash.

> "We were on thirty pounds a week even up to *Pyromania*, when we were selling out arenas."

And yet by 1979-80 you're a 'new wave metal' band, whether you like it or not.
I was glad we were in *Sounds*, but you'd look at articles about us and go: "Look, man, where do you see a correlation in the musical styles between us and, say, Vardis?" Lumping us in with NWOBHM was like lumping us in with Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet.

Things changed for you once you got to America, though.
When we got to the States we were just Def Leppard. They weren't comparing us to anyone. They just embraced it and put it into the vast bucket of various things they would play on American FM radio.

Was it always the aim to be big in America?
It wasn't the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, it was part of the big picture. It wasn't the end game. You know how hard we tried to break the UK. You know how much it meant to us when we finally had a hit here. America was easier, because it was bigger. The UK was so much more difficult. There was only one radio station. In America there was two per town – twenty-four hours a day. What did we have? Tommy Vance doing two hours on a Friday night? We tried and we tried, and in the end Bon Jovi did it for us. In between *Pyromania* and *Hysteria*, Bon Jovi came out with *Slippery When Wet* and put rock back on the radio. Which made it a lot easier for Leppard to finally get accepted in the UK.

Original guitarist Pete Willis, whose problems would eventually lead to him being fired.

Before that, though, you were being trashed even by the rock fans in the UK; the flash bastards that had sold out and taken the Yankee dollar.
We got trashed for being the band that sold out to America, because we wrote a song called *Hello America*. That was me in a basement with no natural light, dying to get out the basement. And that's all that was. We wanted America just the same way Maiden wanted it. But Maiden didn't get trashed for it like we did. We wanted it the same way that Zeppelin got it. We wanted it but we wanted it everywhere. We wanted global domination. We didn't see ourselves as this little local band. We had that mind space of wanting to be the biggest band in the world.

You were helped in that ambition because early on you ditched your home-town management team and signed with former Mercury A&R executive Cliff Bernstein and his partner Peter Mensch, formerly of Lieber-Krebs, then one of the biggest rock management companies in America, looking after Aerosmith, AC/DC, Scorpions et cetera.
We had already signed our record deal before Peter and Cliff became involved. We didn't meet Peter Mensch properly until we did the AC/DC *Highway To Hell* tour [in October 1979]. Rick Allen said to Mensch: "I want you to stand outside this door and listen to the conversation" with our original managers, Frank Stuart-Brown and Peter Martin. Because they just didn't get what we were trying to do. One day [Leppard guitarist] Pete Willis said to Frank Stuart-Brown: "Why don't we stop the show in the middle and do a juggling thing with some playing cards?" And the guy went: "Great idea!" Pete was like: "I'm taking the piss, you fucking idiot!"

That's when we had a meeting and said: "Peter, we want you to manage us." He said fine, but there will be consequences. And we basically had to write off [royalties] from the first two albums to Martin and Stuart-Brown because that's where the contracts were. Though it worked out well, because the first two albums didn't sell as well as everyone thought they would. Steve [Clark] was reluctant to get rid of Pete Martin cos he was his drinking buddy, but the rest of us were up for it.

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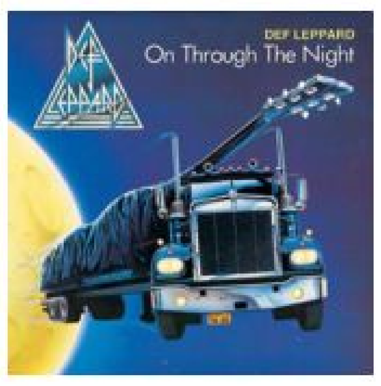
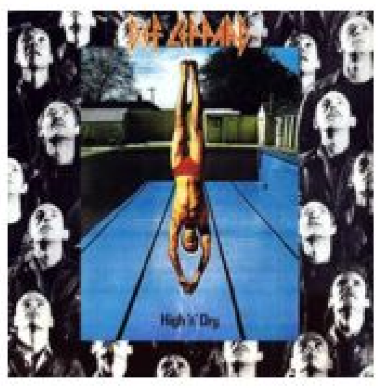
Perm-anent member: bassist Rick Savage.

The other big hitter who had a big influence on your early success was legendary producer Robert John 'Mutt' Lange.
The first album, *On Through The Night*, was recorded relatively quickly, in just a few weeks, with producer Tom Allom, who was Judas Priest's producer at the time. We had no idea how important [Mutt coming in] would be at the beginning. We just hoped that it would be as important as it had been for AC/DC and Foreigner and the Boomtown Rats. Mutt was a pretty hard-core disciplinarian in those early days, but he needed to be. We thought you made records like we had with Tom Allom, where we basically played our live set.

[Mutt] put me and Rick Allen through the fucking wringer on *High 'N' Dry*. Reviewing it in *Sounds*, Geoff Barton said the biggest improvement in this and the first album was my vocals. Which it was. Mutt made me realise that somewhere deep down inside myself was a singer, not just a guy pretending to be one. And he knew Rick was a great drummer but he didn't want him to rely just on what he knew. He forced him to push on to the next level. With the guitars it was the same thing. He really worked them hard. But Pete was easy to work because Pete was a fantastic player – when he wasn't distracted by substances and stuff. Steve was in a tiny little shell, scared to death to come out of it. Sav was playing the bass, which was Mutt's instrument when he was in a band. He'd push us and push until we're going: "Fuck off. I'm not doing it again." And he'd go: "Fine. We'll come back to it tomorrow." We'd be like: "Do you talk to everybody in bands like this?" He'd be: "Yeah."

Mutt Lange would go on to produce the heady brace of albums that not only became the biggest-selling albums of Leppard's career, *Pyromania* (1983) and *Hysteria* (1987), but also would actually redefine ▷





RICK SAVAGE

Leppard's founding bassist has been there every step of the way. We collared Sav to hear about the in-jokes, the albums that slipped between the cracks and why he'd rather play for the masses than for the hipsters.

Interview: **Henry Yates**

When you formed Leppard, did it feel like the start of a world-beating rock band?
In a strange kind of way it did. Whether every bunch of teenagers that starts a band feels that way, and whether it was just naïve enthusiasm, I don't know, but me and Joe definitely felt there was something special there. Looking back, there was no real grounds for it, because we were pretty rubbish. At that time, we knew we weren't super musicians, but we clicked when it came to coming up with ideas.

Back then, did Joe seem like he'd be one of the great rock frontmen of the eighties?
It was hard to say, because we'd never really heard him sing. It was his enthusiasm that got him the job, if you like. He'd be the first to admit that when we started he had to develop his voice. Not really improving it, but developing an identity with it. But in every other aspect he was born to do it.

"*ADRENALIZE* IS THE FIRST TIME I DON'T THINK WE PUT OUR HEART AND SOUL CORRECTLY INTO IT."

How has Leppard tested your friendship since then?
However your friendship was in those early years, regardless of what happens in the next forty years you never lose it. Nothing's changed. It's like being in a bubble. We have the same jokes, we say the same quotes from *Fawlty Towers* and *Blackadder*. The world outside of the bubble gets older, and we just stay doing what we're doing. There's no need for fist-fights, or walking out and leaving tours, or bad-mouthing each other. The thought of that is just so alien to me.

Was Mutt Lange as tough on you as he was on everybody else?
Yeah. Every single element that went into a song was equally important. The sound of the hi-hat was as important as the voice. There was no favouritism and no bullying either. He would bring the best out of you without you ever feeling: "God, I hate this guy. Why can't we just go to the pub?" You'd just edge your way through the song, and when it was finished you'd think: "Bloody hell, that's actually quite good."

You've had plenty of good and bad luck, haven't you?
I know people have been quoted as saying: "They're the unluckiest band in the world." That's nonsense. We've had some bad things happen in the camp over the years, no doubt about that. But hasn't everybody?

Do you think you could have handled the situations with Steve and Pete differently?
With Pete, I think we were more patient than most people would be. We did give him a lot of chances to get himself straightened out. It wasn't as straightforward as "You're fired", it just comes to the point where it couldn't continue.

With Steve, it's really difficult when somebody is on this cycle of… I wouldn't say self-destruction, but just difficult to handle. It needs to come from that person to turn things around. They can get all the support and help, but that can only go so far.

Do you think Leppard lost their way after Steve's death?
It was a very difficult period in the life of the band. And it took us a long while to come out the other side. I personally feel like the whole *Adrenalize* album was an album made by people in a trance. I wasn't completely one hundred per cent there. And it's the first time I don't think we put our heart and soul correctly into it. We did as much as we could, but it just felt like we were sleepwalking through the process. And because of that, the album has a certain vibe and sound that, to me, doesn't have the unbelievable ground-breaking touches that the previous two albums did.

Do you think of yourself as the guardian of the band, in a sense?
Not really. Factually, it's me and Joe that have been in the band the longest. But you all develop little roles. Joe will always be the flag bearer and mouthpiece. I really don't like doing interviews. But Joe seems to thrive on it. He's such a fan of music and he loves representing the band. So why not? Go ahead!

What do you feel are Leppard's most underrated moments?
Slang kind of slipped between the cracks. At the time, the masses of the Leppard fans were expecting another *Pour Some Sugar* ▷

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On Me or *Do You Want To Get Rocked* [sic], which is what we were trying to distance ourselves from. We needed to do it for ourselves, or we'd have gone nuts trying to recreate the same sound.

None of the 'hipster' rock press wrote about Leppard, though. Did you care?
No. It may have been cause for a bit of a joke. When it comes to critical acclaim, we've always felt we were underrated. But you accept it. We were never the cool, credible band, ever. To us it was all about the songs. Not about a movement, not about a political standpoint or standing up for less fortunate people. That doesn't mean to say we disregarded those people, but we also believed the best way we could contribute was by letting people escape their boring lives for a couple of hours. Which I think is valid. It's pure entertainment.

You still play the hits, but you write new material too. Is it important to do both?
I don't have a problem playing the hits. Y'know, if you didn't want to play this song for forty years, then don't write it, or don't even be in the business. If someone said to you [as a kid]: "Forty years in the future, you'll still be playing this song because people love it so much," you'd snap their hand off. But I do think it's important to keep doing fresh things. Not necessarily for the fans, but for the internal workings of the band. It keeps us fresh, and that allows us to put fresh energy into even the old songs.

Are you glad that Leppard got big before the internet killed album sales?
I guess so, yeah. I must say I'm happy that we got together when we did. I would hate to be trying to do it all over again in 2018. Even being eighteen again. It's just different now. It's a different vibe. There's so many other distractions that teenagers have.

Do younger rock bands tell you that Leppard were an influence on them?
That probably only started happening in the late nineties, when bands started coming up to us and saying: "You guys were great." Whereas bands like Nirvana and Soundgarden would try and do anything to not sound like Def Leppard. Quite rightly.

Is another forty years of Leppard completely out of the question?
I'll be ninety-seven by then. I'd be happy just to still be breathing at that point. But there's no time limit on stuff like this. I mean, the Stones are going out this summer. And as long as they're performing to a level that doesn't disappoint people, why not? We were out with The Who in South America in October. Admittedly it's only Roger and Pete left, but the songs were played as great as they ever were. So the band live on. Same with Queen. We're still relatively young, y'know? It kinda works in our favour, because we've got ten or fifteen years on those guys. So while they're still doing it, it gives us something up to look up and try to achieve.

Flying the flag: just in case people didn't know which country they were from.

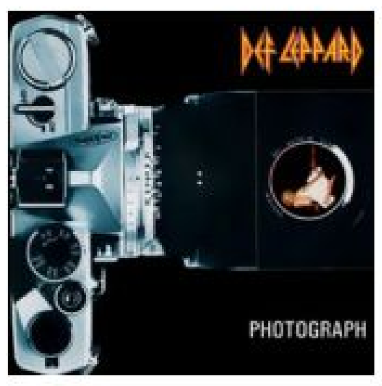
what a rock record could do in the 1980s. Those are the landmarks on which Leppard built their career.

Yet those years also came at an enormous personal cost for the band, beginning with the firing of Pete Willis on the eve of recording *Pyromania*, then segueing horrifically into the car crash on December 31, 1982 in which drummer Rick Allen lost his arm, again at the start of making an album, and ending just a year after the *Hysteria* world tour ended with the death of Steve Clark.

With Pete Willis, is it to correct to say his firing wasn't just down to drunkeness and drug stuff, you just didn't like him very much any more anyway?
I don't think Pete was a big coke-head. I think he smoked a lot of weed and drank a lot of alcohol. But he was belligerent after the sun went down and he'd been drinking. It wasn't that he wasn't coming up with the goods, because he did co-write that [*Pyromania*]. But all the sexy stuff was Mutt's arrangement and Sav's and Steve's writing. Pete would throw in the odd thing. But Pete would just avoid the situation if he didn't like what we were doing. I don't think he was that keen in the direction the band was going in. Whereas we wanted to go a bit more commercial pop, he didn't really want to go there.

Pete told me he'd offered to go and see a shrink, like Steve had, as a last resort, but that you all said no. Is that true?
That's absolutely true. Everybody – Mensch, Bernstein, friends, family, road crew, other bands – was saying to us how many more last chances are you gonna give this guy? We gave him hundreds. I rang Phil [Collen] on the *High 'N' Dry* tour and said: "Can you learn twelve or fourteen songs in two days? Because if you can we're gonna fire him now." I got talked down off the ledge with that one.

"Lumping us in with NWOBHM was like lumping us in with Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet."



Steve wouldn't get drunk until the end of the gig. He never turned up at the studio incapable of playing. Not until the very, very end. But with Pete it had been going on for two years. I remember Mutt coming to us and laughing and saying: "You've got to come and hear this solo." We go in and Pete was trying to play the back of his guitar, he was that drunk. Two bottles of brandy, and when he got up the next day he couldn't even stand. I got so angry, because he'd promised us it wouldn't happen any more.

So World Cup Final day, 1982, we had Pete driven down from Sheffield to London – awkward for the guy driving. Everybody knew what was gonna happen. We said we can't deal with this any more. "I'm sorry, Pete. I'm really, really sorry, but we're done." He said: "What if I go and see a shrink?" I was the one that said no to that. "No. If you really thought that that would solve the problem, you'd have done it already."

What was it about Phil that you thought he would bring to the group?
Number one, he's a brilliant guitar player and writer and singer. But I didn't know half the things that I know now when he first joined. Musically, we bought the same records in the same week, growing up. I didn't know that, but when we did get together all those things were in the background ready to be discussed. We still argue over which of us bought the first Montrose album first.

He'd stayed at my mum and dad's house when Girl [with Collen their guitarist] opened for UFO in Sheffield. We hung out, me, Steve, Phil and [Girl singer] Phil Lewis. We got up on Sledgehammer's gear in the Genevieve, which was actually a disco. We asked if we could have a go on their gear. I went on the drums, Steve went on the bass, Phil on guitar and Phil Lewis sang, and we did *You Really Got Me*, and *Do You Love Me* by Kiss. It was hilarious. Steve lay

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down on the drum riser and passed out. But he didn't pass out and try and beat everybody up. Pete was a nasty little piece of work when he'd a drink. Everybody else in this band just threw up and went to sleep [laughs]. Until Steve passed out and never woke up again.

We've had some major problems in this band with alcohol. Pete wasn't great at it and eventually Steve wasn't great at it. But at the time, when it was still neck and neck, no way we were ever gonna fire Steve, because he kept coming up with stuff, and he'd be okay the next day after a shower and some breakfast. He never, ever drank until the encore.

When *Pyromania* took off so spectacularly, were you relieved, surprised, scared… What happened?
The honest truth about *Pyromania* is we were at that stage of our lives where we thought it was about time. We thought it was due. We looked at other bands and we thought the album that we'd made was up there and beyond other bands that were more successful than we'd been. And when it was our time we all kind of looked at each other and went, yeah, we did the right thing. This is exactly what we wanted. The first gig we did with Phil in the band was at the Marquee club in London in February 1983. Seven months later we did Mac Murphy Stadium in San Diego, the last show of the American tour, in front of fifty-five thousand people.

The US tour had begun that year with Leppard opening for Billy Squier, but your tour shirt was outselling Squier's by a ratio of ten to one. Then you began your own headline tour with Uriah Heep supporting, then Gary Moore. Meanwhile, the album's taking off like a rocket.
The headline tour started out a bit spotty. The first gig we did was somewhere in Texas and there were maybe four or five thousand people in this arena that held probably ten. Then three weeks later it really started to kick off cos *Photograph* really took off [as a single] and *Rock Of Ages* kind of cemented it. By June, which was a mere six weeks later, we were selling out faster than the last Led Zeppelin tour – arenas selling out in three minutes!

You should have been all set for your next album. But Mutt was busy making *Foreigner 4*, so you brought in Meat Loaf svengali Jim Steinman to produce. And it went horribly wrong.
That's an understatement. Eventually Steve and Phil just called a meeting and said he's got to go. I didn't even work with him. I didn't record one note of the vocals. It didn't get that far. I do remember all [Steinman's] farting around, though. ▷

RICK ALLEN

Having joined the band in '78, Leppard's drummer has come through adulation, addiction and amputation without missing a beat.

Interview: **Henry Yates**

It's 1978. How does a fourteen-year-old kid come to be in Def Leppard?
I'd been playing with local bands, just beer money and covers. At the ripe old age of fourteen I was ready to quit the business – I say that with tongue-in-cheek. But that very same day, I saw an article in the *Sheffield Star*: 'Leopard Loses Skins'; at that time it was still Deaf Leopard. They were looking for a drummer. And when we met up at The Limit club in Sheffield, we realised we'd probably all rubbed shoulders at the same gigs – The Sweet, Thin Lizzy, you name it. When they told me about this EP they'd just recorded, I got this sense of being lifted up. They were writing their own music, and that to me was huge.

What do you remember about the audition?
A few days later we went down to the rehearsal space at the spoon factory. Two other drummers showed up. One was [original drummer] Tony Kenning, who wanted his job back, but they'd already told me he's more interested in his girlfriend than in coming to rehearsal. I went last – which kinda gave me the opportunity to learn the parts in the few minutes I had – and when I played with them there were smiles all round. Lo and behold I got the job. I joined around about my fifteenth birthday. Crazy.

> **"WE KEEP LEARNING FROM OUR SUCCESSES AND OUR MISTAKES. THAT'S WHAT KEEPS IT VIBRANT."**

Who was leading the band in those formative days?
Joe was always a great driving force. Whatever he says about what he lacked in talent, he definitely didn't lack in his knowledge of music. And confidence, just getting up there and doing it. I really looked up to him as someone who fired everybody up.

Joe told us about your involvement in cutting ties with the band's original management.
I thought it was the right decision. I was so naïve at that time, I didn't know what I was doing. But I remember grabbing Peter Mensch and saying: "Come here, have a listen." So we stood outside the door, and our old management team were in the room arguing about something. It was so juvenile, the way they communicated. For them to bring that conflict within earshot of us wasn't very professional. That was it. I guess Peter and Clifford had their eye on us for a while. After they saw us opening up for AC/DC, I think they got it.

Joe told us that Mutt was pretty brutal with you during the making of *High 'N' Dry*.
That was the first time I really experienced hard work, and actually got to the point where I doubted my ability as a player. Because Mutt had this wonderful psychology. He never said you were doing it wrong. He just had a set of criteria – y'know, good vibe, good timing, in tune, whatever – that made you challenge yourself. I learnt more about playing drums doing that record than at any other time.

Did becoming a millionaire in the mid-eighties make you happy?
I wouldn't necessarily say so. I think it's an inside job – you're either a happy kind of person or not. I must admit I've been through some really depressing times, but whether I felt happy or depressed it never had anything to do with money. I always felt like it was something within me, things I needed to overcome, whether that was demons, self-medication, you name it. Eventually I made the right choices, and now I guess I'm pretty consistent – I don't go to the lows that I used to. But I don't think money has anything to do with it. To be honest, after my accident, because the record [*Hysteria*] was taking so long, I found myself pretty much penniless.

Do you think Leppard might have sounded different had you not lost your arm?
I think so. Mutt being Mutt, I think he saw an opportunity, he didn't necessarily see a setback. And actually that was a big part of my healing – to stop comparing myself to how I used to be, and other drummers, and embrace how unique this was and how it could set us apart from everybody else. That was a big factor in me getting better as a person and a player, to shed that weight of "God, I wish I could play the way I used to", or "God, I wish I could play like that guy." Instead it was like: "This is where I am. I can't go back. I may as well go forward." A lot of that inspiration came from Mutt. He embraced it.

Joe said that after the accident, you locked yourself away in Wisseloord Studios for five months and re-learned to play. What are your memories of that period?
It became an obsession. I didn't want to let them down. I didn't want to let myself ▷

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down. I just figured the more time I could get behind a drum kit – and especially a new kind of electronic drum kit – the more knowledge I would gather. The guys were in there too [recording *Hysteria*], and I was in what was almost like a sound booth. So I could see everything that was going on around me, and that inspired me even more. I got a lot of encouragement from the guys. They obviously wanted me to succeed. At other times I just needed to be left alone.

Did you push drum technology forward?
Phil was over at our rehearsal studios a few months back, and Neil Peart was in the studio next door, and he was getting prepped for the Rush tour. And Neil said to Phil: "If it wasn't for your drummer Rick, electronic drums would not be where they are today." I thought that was a massive compliment, especially coming from somebody like him.

Do you think Leppard have had the critical respect they deserve?
There was a bit of a stigma attached to rock bands. I don't know what it was. It amazes me that sometimes people don't see that we're a working band, and we continue to get better. I was really surprised that certain journalists didn't see or feel it the way I did, because I felt like we were a force to be reckoned with. And I think now, more and more people are getting that.

Do you mind Joe being the mouthpiece of the band?
He's the master of ceremonies. He has a vast knowledge of music. He was the driving force behind Leppard, and I love the fact he can do that. When I'm on stage I have a drum kit to hide behind. He has a microphone. It's the fact that he can put himself out there with so much confidence, be comfortable in his own skin. That's something that I couldn't do. In the same way that he'll admit he can't do what I do.

Do you think Def Leppard are a lucky or an unlucky band?
A bit of both. There were plenty of ups and downs. And it's the downs that make you grow, whether that's what happened to me, or Steve, or Pete not being with us any more. I think all of those things build character.

Have the friendships within the band changed over forty years?
Everybody's got their idiosyncracies, including myself, and I'm sure I've pissed people off along the way. But I think ultimately there is a bond, a brotherhood, that just gets stronger. I think the one thing that keeps us strong is realising the chemistry of the band, and not allowing those negative times to pull us apart.

Forty years. That's a hell of a milestone.
Yeah. We didn't think we were going to make it past next week. We're a work in progress and we keep learning from our successes and our mistakes. That's what keeps it vibrant.

Rick Allen with the drum kit that saved his career.

"I want to change the carpet in the control room, I don't like the colour." He'd already had the carpet changed in his hotel. At meals, you'd pass him the menu and, blasé, he'd just toss it to his personal [assistant] and go: "Just order one of everything." Yeah, but we're paying for that! Fuck off!

With Steinman gone you eventually worked your way back to having Mutt come in and do the job. Only by then Rick had lost his arm. That became such a defining moment in the Def Leppard story.
Rick losing his arm put the Steinman thing in the shade. We had a Christmas break. I'm living in Cobham, in Surrey, very nice, and my mum and dad were down with me and my girlfriend, for the holidays. The afternoon of New Year's Eve, the phone rang, and I was expecting "Happy New Year" from Pete Way or Brian May, whoever. No, it was Mensch. He said: "Are you sat down?" Which immediately told me someone had died. Then he told me that Rick had crashed his car. I said: "Is he dead?" He said: "No. But he's lost his arm." He's a drummer, he can't lose his arm! That's when your brain goes into serious spin mode. Your skin goes cold and clammy. You've got these weird mental and physical emotions going off. I remember bursting into tears and thinking: poor kid. He was twenty-one. And he's just come off a six-million-selling record, and it's probably all over. Because I did think that for a couple of days. Why would I not?

I went to visit him when they'd actually reattached the arm. His brother said: "His hand is warm – touch it." I didn't want to. But I did, and his hand was warm. His arm was back on. Wow, great. We leave and – boom! – they take it off again. They were scared that gangrene would set in. So that's a double whammy. Thank God for him he was in an induced coma, so he never went through that emotion of knowing he'd had it back and it'd come off again – till long after the fact.

Out of all that was why the album was called *Hysteria*. We had paparazzi trying to take pictures of him in hospital. So we had security and he was up on the eleventh floor. Crazy. Then later, when we were trying to come with a title for the album, Rick just said: "Why don't we just call it Hysteria?" Harking back to all that ridiculousness. Because hysteria can go two ways: it can be running to the front at a Cheap Trick concert, or it can be running from a hydrogen bomb.

"We wanted global domination. We didn't see ourselves as this little local band."

Within two months of the accident, he was back in the studio. Pete Hartley was a local drum technician and electronic genius in Sheffield who'd started to build Rick this kit where, basically, instead of hitting the snare drum with his hand, he hit a pedal on the floor with his foot. Rick locked himself away in a little room in Wisselord studios, in Amsterdam, wouldn't let anybody hear him play for five months. Not a peep.

Then one day he came into the control room and said: "I want you all to come and listen to something." We went in and he played *When The Levee Breaks* by Led Zeppelin. And it was like our bones melted, because we all just sank to the floor. It was amazing. We couldn't believe it. I mean, he still had a long way to go before he'd be ready to get back on stage, and it wasn't all plain sailing; he got addicted to some really bad drugs for a while. But I look back at it now and I go: "I'm not surprised."

That drum kit was state of the art in 1985, and it's been replaced over the years as technology has improved. Does Rick still have it?
When we did the *Viva Hysteria* shows, we had a little Def Leppard museum in the lobby and I saw the original kit. Oh my God! It looks like *Jurassic Park* compared to what he's playing now.

Savage and Elliott with Jim Steinman at Wisseloord studios in 1984.

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***Hysteria* was released in 1987 and became the biggest-selling album of your career. And it's still one of the greatest, most innovative, forward-looking rock albums of all time.**
When we got accused in the early eighties of selling out, it was by people who were into more heavy metal music. But when *Hysteria* sold a million copies in the UK alone it showed we were right to not worry about what those sorts of fans thought. We ended up with a much bigger fan base who just loved the band for what it really was. When people saw us on *Top Of The Pops* doing *Animal*, they heard a really great song that style-wise had more in common with INXS or U2, The Police with *Roxanne*, something like that. And that was the band we wanted to be. We wanted to be like Queen-meets-AC/DC. We wanted the power of a band like AC/DC on *Highway To Hell*, but we wanted the musical space to grow into like Queen had. We wanted to do slow, medium, fast, acoustic, electric, whatever we wanted.

It's amazing how that album still resonates to this day. When it was reissued with our other albums it went to number one in America in the 'catalogue chart'. We had the top three places: *Hysteria* was at number one, *Pyromania* number two and *Vault* at number three.

And it had your first – and so far only – US number one single in *Love Bites*, a lush ballad that had such a futuristic sound it was like a modern *I'm Not In Love;* this great song couched in state-of-the-art studio futurism.
I can't believe the amount of people that have come up to us and gone: "I can't believe that lyric. It's like you were in our kitchen writing that lyric, watching us argue." That's because it's about human interaction, human nature. We were never going to be a band that spent ten songs on an album singing about dungeons and fucking dragons. It was always going to be about what most people relate as closest to them, which is probably another human being. Yes, we'd tackled drugs in songs like *From The Inside*, and we dabbled in revenge and the non-interaction of humans, which is what *Die Hard The Hunter* is all about. Then things like *Gods Of War*, which is about standing in Finland, at the time, watching the missiles going over, cancelling each other out, from American and Russia, thinking: "How futile is this?"

We suddenly had the most creative period of our career. And that's when we came up with *Pour Some Sugar On Me*. Nothing was out of the question on that album. We'd go out to a gay disco in Holland – because those were the only clubs near Wisselord – And hear the new electronic beats and stuff that were going on, then go into the studio the next day and tell Mutt ▷

PHIL COLLEN

The guitar wizard's arrival in the band in 1982 heralded the best and worst of times. He looks back on breaking America, crap band names and how "we had more in common with Earth, Wind & Fire than with Iron Maiden".

Interview: **Henry Yates**

You joined Leppard in 1982. Did you have high hopes?
We knew we had a special album. *Pyromania* was different to anything I'd heard. I had all the fun stuff, none of the heavy lifting – that came on *Hysteria*. Pete and Steve had done these amazing rhythm guitar beds and it was a joy to whizz around and play solos over the top. It was just hooks – *Photograph*, *Rock Of Ages*, *Foolin'*, *Stagefright*. Mutt was going: "Just have fun, be a lead guitarist, go nuts." In America it was a radio hit almost immediately. That was the most exciting period, going from playing for half-empty theatres in England to headlining arenas.

"OUR AMBITION WASN'T REALLY TO BE FAMOUS. WE WANTED TO MAKE GREAT MUSIC AND FOR PEOPLE TO REALLY DIG IT."

Did it hurt that the UK was slower than America to embrace Leppard?
It didn't bother me at all. It's an American art form. I learnt from listening to the Stones and The Who, and they learnt from listening to American artists – everything from Stevie Wonder to Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters, Aretha Franklin, blues-based, soul-based, all that stuff. Someone once asked me: "Why do you sing with an American accent?" And it's because I learnt from all these American artists. Mick Jagger sings with an American accent too.

What did you think of the band's name at first?
It was alright. It was a bit of a spoof on 'Led Zeppelin'. It was a bit quirky to begin with, but then it kinda stuck. And it's a living, breathing entity before you know it. Names are a weird thing. 'The Beatles' is a really crap name when you weigh it up, but you wouldn't change that for the world.

What were your first impressions of the guys in the band?
Well, I knew 'em before that. Joe and Steve would come down to London and stay on my mum's couch, and she'd make them beans on toast. And when I was on tour with Girl, me and Phil Lewis slept in Joe's spare room because we'd been out jamming at this little club in Sheffield. The funny thing is, when I joined the band, the accent was so thick. I remember Rick Allen saying something and I had to read his lips. And back then I had a very distinct East London accent. But over the years, living in the States, we've all kind of mellowed out.

How do you think your arrival changed Leppard's sound?
I had a kinda aggressive, shouty singing voice, and all of a sudden that was a feature. And my guitar playing was very different, somewhere between Ritchie Blackmore, Eddie Van Halen and Michael Schenker.

Joe said critics would always lump Leppard in with NWOBHM.
I thought we had more in common with Earth, Wind & Fire or The Police than we did with Iron Maiden.

How about the old chestnut that Leppard albums are overproduced?
We wanted them to be like that. They weren't gratuitously overproduced. There was a reason for it. When you hear someone overdoing it in the studio for no other reason than the songs are crap, that's something else. These songs were great. I was listening to Queen today. Amazing. You listen to those records now and they're pure bliss and magic. And they got accused of overproducing. There's a lot of lazy bands who won't work a song properly. They'll just write a song and record it. That works occasionally, but for most mere mortals, it requires a bit of hard work.

How would you describe the Leppard work ethic?
A lot of musicians are really lazy. We've worked our asses off. And what I find is that most people are not prepared to work that hard. I just did a TV show in upstate New York. They told me: "Well, it's an early start, eight in the morning." And I told them: "I get up at six every day." People are not prepared to do that. With Mutt, we would work until we fell asleep. I can actually remember waking up once and seeing Steve, Joe and Mutt asleep on the floor or on the couch. We'd been in the middle of a song, but it had got really late – like, six in the morning – and everybody had just drifted off.

When *Hysteria* took off did anyone in the band start acting like a rock star?
Not really. We've all been guilty of time-of-the-month things. But no. We'd worked ▷

so hard, and gone through so much. Rick had the accident, and we'd spent all this money on the record. Plus our parents were all English and they'd lived through the Blitz. There was a shared value system that we all had. I think that really helped us not be blasé or take anything for granted. Our ambition wasn't really to be famous. We wanted to make great music and for people to really dig it. The rock star thing is all fine and dandy, but you've got to be able to back it up; you've got to be able to write songs. And not be a dickhead.

When you think of Steve, does it make you feel happy or sad?
Both. I think of him every single day. He was my best friend. When I think of shitty, sad things about Steve, it's usually followed by something that makes me smile.

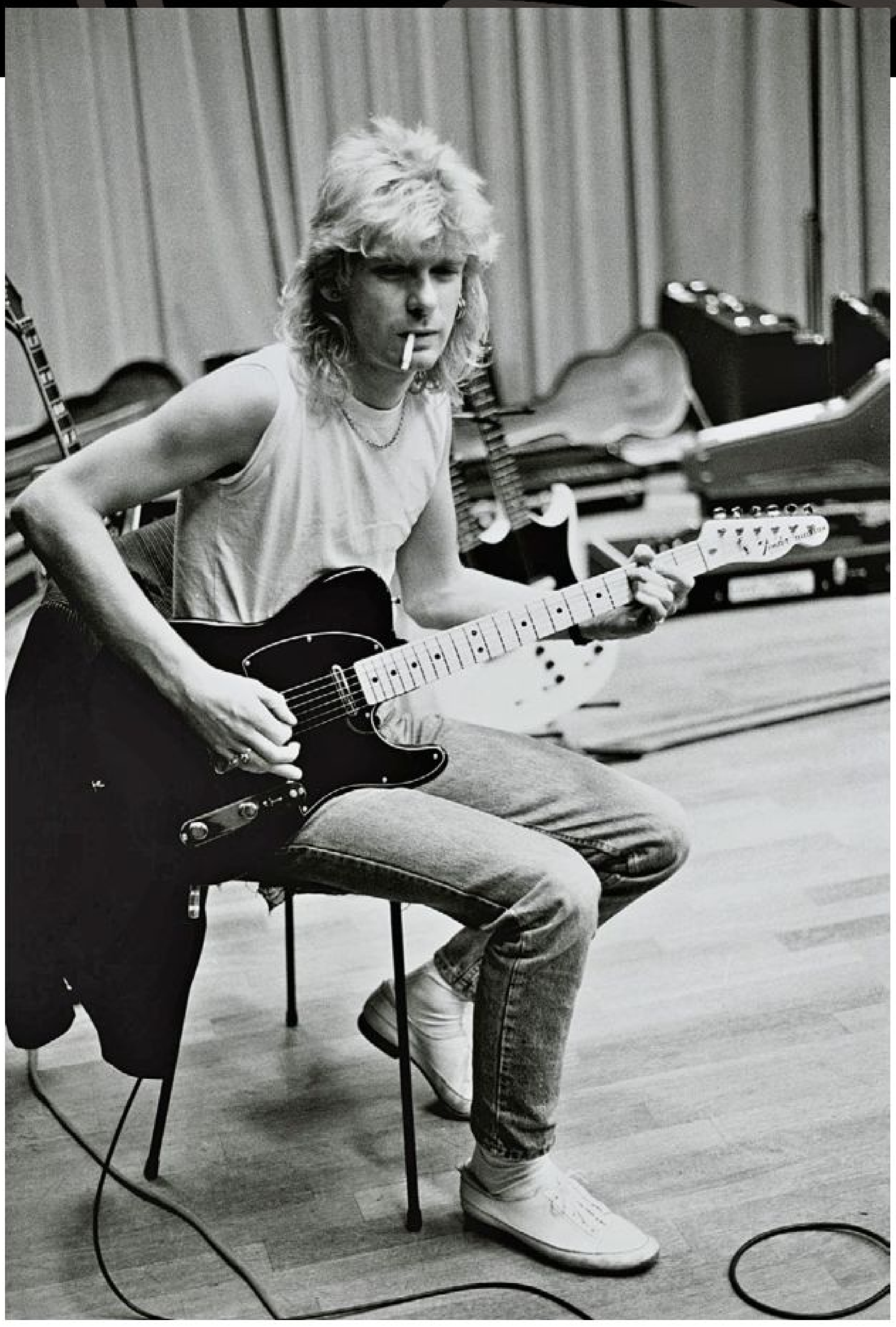
What have been the most difficult times commercially in the band?
After Steve died and we were doing the *Slang* album, and the musical landscape changed. Y'know, Nirvana came out, which I thought was a breath of fresh air, because it had got really stale with these really naff bands – hair-metal stuff. No lyrical content, no vibe, just a bunch of people with good hair products. So Nirvana came out – and Pearl Jam and STP and all these bands – and it was a bit like the punk thing in England. It changed the landscape. Unfortunately we got caught up in that. I thought *Slang* was great, but it came out at a weird time, and we were not very popular at that moment.

What's the secret to never splitting up?
It's ego. It's how you were raised. It's your value system. People get so big-headed and stroppy.

How do you think the classic Leppard material has aged?
Well, the other day, on the G3 tour, I was trying out John Petrucci's rig. I plugged my guitar in and ended up playing all these *Hysteria* songs to see how they sounded. And they sounded amazing. And then, when I listened to the record, it doesn't sound dated at all, because of what went into it.

For you, does commercial success trump critical acclaim?
I like the fact that millions of people went out and bought our record. That, to me, is a bit more [important]. Especially as I get older. I had a very interesting tip once from Ian Hunter. He said: "When you reach fifty-five you'll stop worrying what anyone thinks about you. You won't care if a twenty-year-old judges you." And he was absolutely right.

Which do you consider to be the 'classic' Def Leppard line-up?
We play better right now. We sing better right now. The last tour was the best we've ever sounded, I've got no doubt. Pioneer-wise, I think *Hysteria* was it. But as far as the band being the best it's ever been, it's absolutely right now.



Steve Clark: a wonderful guitarist, but he could not escape his downward spiral.

about it. That's how we got tracks like *Excitable*. Tracks like *Animal* also changed from how they'd been before. We kept the vocals and drums, then had Steve, Phil and Sav sit in the control room with their guitars and see what they came up with.

Back on tour in America as the album rises up the charts, once again you're all going through your own personal struggles. Phil Collen stopped drinking completely after a night on the town with Steve Clark during the making of *Hysteria*. Then you stopped drinking too, for the duration of the *Hysteria* tour. Was that also related to what happened to Pete, and to Steve's growing drinking problem?
Nothing to do with what you think at all. We were five shows into that in-the-round tour. I was in bed in a hotel after the show, and I remember staring at the ceiling, not being able to sleep, going: "I can't do this if I drink." It took me five gigs to figure it out.

In-the-round is an incredibly, insanely aerobic kind of thing to do – and try and sing as well. And those songs… We were trying to replicate an album that is still to this day state-of-the-art. We were still learning how to do it. First night, in Glenn Falls, I got to four songs in and started hyperventilating. I went down my hole on the side of the stage, during a Phil solo. End up breathing into a paper bag.

So I stared at the ceiling, not being able to sleep, thinking: "How am I gonna get through two hundred and twenty more shows if this is how it's gonna be? " So I quit. Because it was hard in-the-round. It was really hard. For a singer. You can't stand still, you've got to keep moving. The guys had identical microphones on either side of the stage, so they could stand still for a little bit. I had to keep moving all the time. It was insane. And I just couldn't have done it drinking. No way.

"We were never going to be a band singing about dungeons and fking dragons."**

Meanwhile, Steve seemed to be falling apart on that tour whenever I visited.
I remember reading articles where you were out on the road with us on various parts of that tour, and just you and Steve would be in his room, and he would open up to you and bitch. And you'd probably think, fuck, what kind of organisation is he in. But he was only like that with you. You were like his mentor or his confidant. There was nobody else that he ever did that for. And those negatives that you got out of him were only literally those nights that you were there. He wasn't doing this to people every other night you weren't around. He didn't pick another Mick Wall from another town and bitch and moan. You were the only person he trusted to talk like that for. I guess he was harbouring certain negatives in his thing. But he just put them to one side for the rest of the tour.

It wasn't like he was this miserable wanker. He was a funny guy, man. He was a really good guy. When Pete got angry, Steve got sad. Steve's past came back to haunt him. He had some childhood issues that I don't really want to go into. You can only imagine what they were. And they were the reason he drank, I think, personally. But I don't want to get sued by people so I'm not gonna go any further on that one. Use your imagination. But he wanted it [success]. He loved it. Would he have gone out there as a solo artist and achieved the success he achieved? Absolutely not. He needed other people to pull him into that situation. When they did, he delivered. He was like a circus. "Ladies and gentleman, we're pulling out the guy that we're gonna shoot out the cannon." He'd willingly get in the cannon. He wasn't the entire circus, but he wanted to be *in* the circus. That's the best way I can put it.

After *Hysteria*, Def Leppard took a long break, before coming back together to work on material for their next album. Again, Mutt wasn't available to fill the producer's chair. He was working with Bryan Adams on what would become the squillion-selling *Waking Up The Neighbours* album, complete with the number-one-forever hit *(Everything I Do) I Do It For You*. Mutt did, however, involve himself in the writing process with Leppard, and, as Elliott puts it now, "was only ever a phone call away". Yet in a tragically weird echo of *Pyromania* and

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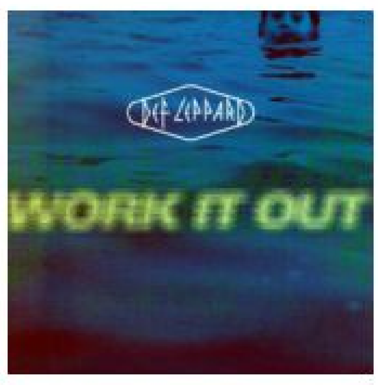
Hysteria, Leppard fell foul of fortune when Steve Clark went to sleep one night in January 1991 and never woke up again.

We touched on Steve's death earlier, and you've talked about it at length in *Classic Rock* in recent times. Can I just ask you this: were you relieved, in the sense of seeing someone clearly so pained and broken finally out of their misery, and also in terms of allowing the band to carry on without that burden?
In no specific order, I felt incredibly sad when I heard that he'd died. But there was a part of me that was actually quite relieved. Cos I knew it was gonna happen sooner or later. At least now we can both be at peace with it and move on. We'd given him six months off, told him to go and spend some time in the beautiful house he'd bought in Chelsea, eat some food he'd cooked himself, and take his clothes out of the suitcase and put them in the wardrobe. But instead he spent most of his time in the pub round the corner, and do things like get so drunk he'd fall down the stairs and crack his rib. So he'd be on serious [pain] medication for cracked ribs. Then he'd carry on drinking. That's how he died. It wasn't cocaine. He had morphine, probably, cos he was on prescription painkillers. He washed it down with vodka and never woke up. Just fell asleep so deep he just died.

If he hadn't died but instead come back after six months still messed up on booze, would you have made the decision to let him go?
Yes. That's the honest answer to that. But that's why we gave him six months off. Pete Willis, we wanted him to go. With Steve we wanted him to come back. He was creative, he was our friend, he was in pain. The stuff that happened around Steve's drinking and was unreported – and will stay unreported – just puts you in that head-space where you go: "I just don't want to do this any more."

On tour, if I was in the hotel room next to his, there were times I'd think I'd be very surprised if he doesn't wake up in the morning. I'd see him the next day and go: "What the fuck was going on last night?" Noises and just shit going off in his room. I don't miss that. That used to stress me out unbelievably. And I don't have that any more. That's what I mean when I say ▷



VIV CAMPBELL

After 1992's *Adrenalize*, the Irish journeyman helped Leppard turn the corner in a tough commercial decade. A quarter-century later, he reflects on hard times, absent friends and matching pyjamas.

Interview: **Henry Yates**

Rewind to 1992. What made you want to join Def Leppard?
I was always a fan. I had their first single. I always thought they were head and shoulders above everything else that was happening with that whole NWOBHM movement. There was Leppard, there was Iron Maiden, and then there was a bunch of others who were nowhere near as good.

The first time I met them, I was in Whitesnake. We had a day off and we all went to the Leppard show in Detroit. After that, Joe kept in touch, because we had mutual friends in Dublin. We'd go to dinner, play pool, talk shite. A year after Steve had passed away, Joe called me to say that now they'd finished *Adrenalize* they'd decided to continue as a five-piece and were looking for another guitar player, and would I be interested. Had it been any other band on the planet, I'd have said no. I'd been in and out of so many bands and I was really burnt by it all. But this was Def Leppard, one of the biggest bands in the world. Certainly the most ambitious band in the hard rock genre by a country mile.

"I CAN SAY OBJECTIVELY – BECAUSE I WASN'T IN THE BAND THEN – THAT *HYSTERIA* IS ONE OF THE GREATEST FKING RECORDS OF ALL TIME."**

Your backing vocals changed the sound of the band immediately.
Something that not a lot of people knew about me was that I was actually a pretty good singer. Back in the Dio days, Ronnie never wanted me to sing. And I'm sure I wasn't very good. I remember asking: "Ronnie, can I sing backups?" And he said: "No! Ritchie Blackmore never sang. Tony Iommi never sang. Guitar players play guitar. Singers sing. Get over there!" So that was me shut down. In Whitesnake, Coverdale was actually very encouraging about my nascent vocal aspirations and turned me on to a vocal coach. So I'd worked on it pretty hard. By the time I got into a rehearsal room with Leppard I think it was a pleasant surprise to the guys that I could elevate the band's vocals. I don't think Steve Clark was much into singing.

Did you ever feel bad about taking over from Steve?
It was obviously a difficult situation. By that stage I was used to walking into bands with Dio and Whitesnake. But for them [Leppard] it must have been very difficult. To this day, I'm sure when they look over stage-right and it's not Steve, that's gotta be strange. I've always tried to be very respectful of the fact that I'm walking in Steve's shoes, because maybe even ninety per cent of what we play is music that Steve created.

Your arrival coincided with tougher commercial times. Did you feel the downturn?
Oh yeah, absolutely. It was quite soul-destroying, actually. It was just bad timing, I guess. I wasn't involved in the *Adrenalize* record. I stepped into the band for that tour, which was something like fifteen months. And I mean, we started the tour as a huge, long-haired, dressed-up arena-rock band, and we finished it looking like Pearl Jam, wearing ratty jeans, growing goatees and cutting our hair. During the course of that fifteen-month tour the entire musical landscape changed.

Right off the back of that, we went in to do *Slang*. It was such a strange time in the music business. It was such a strange time to be in Def Leppard. And this was my first album with them. It was a bit of a double whammy. So I have very mixed feelings about *Slang*. In some ways it's incredible, in other ways it's disappointing to me. But it is what it is. And I think it was pretty much all we could do. The only thing we knew for sure at that time period was that we couldn't be Def Leppard; we couldn't go in and make a record that was off the heels of *Adrenalize*.

When I've interviewed you in the past, I've sometimes got the impression you wish Leppard would stop being so obsessive in the studio and just get on with it.
I think it's fair to say that I'm the one guy in the band [who has that attitude]. Because I didn't grow up in that mentality. But I fully understand why the band operates that way. My first album was [Dio's] *Holy Diver*, where we wrote the songs and we played them in real time with Ronnie. That's what I'm used to. I think there's pros and cons to both approaches. Sometimes things ▷

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benefit from stepping back and having a bit of perspective, and getting in there and thinking about things, and sometimes you get lost in the forest.

Do you feel like Leppard gets the critical respect they deserve?
Well, put it this way. Back in the eighties I remember thinking: "Def Leppard never got a Grammy." I can say objectively – because I wasn't in the band then – that *Hysteria* is one of the greatest fucking rock records of all time. In fact it's one of the greatest records of all time, aside from the rock genre. And not only did it not win a Grammy, it didn't even get nominated. I think that really summed it up for me.

I think it's a little different now. Because the band has been together forty years, we're beginning to step into the same company of these other great British bands. I think you get a lot more respect if you stay the course.

If you weren't all in a band together, would you still be friends?
To some degree, yeah. We have a lot in common, but there's also a lot we don't have in common. We tour pretty much every year with other bands of our generation, and I think we're the only one that still shares a dressing room. I think that says a lot. It's not like we wear matching pyjamas and go on holiday together, but we sit together in the same room and prepare for the show, and we undress afterwards and have a post-mortem. I can honestly say that almost every other band of our generation does not share a dressing room… so they obviously don't get along too well [laughs].

Some bands just roll out the hits. How important is it for Leppard that they write new music?
I think it's vital to the lifeblood of any band, to remain creative. It doesn't matter that not so many people want to buy a new record now. I've been seeing more and more kids coming to our shows, particularly in America, but all around the world, and I do honestly believe that's the upside of music piracy. A lot of these kids haven't bought records for the last fifteen years, but they became exposed to the music, they became fans of the band and now they're coming to the shows. And I don't mean being dragged by their parents, they're coming on their own. That's very encouraging. We're growing our audience. We're continuing to write new music to remain a vital and creative force.

Do Leppard still have creative gas in the tank?
Very much so. More than ever, actually. I think everyone in this band is at the peak of their game.

Twenty-three years later, are you proud to say you're in Def Leppard?
Definitely. It's a unique band. I don't think there's ever been another band like Def Leppard. I'm sure there never will be.

Hello America: (l-r) Viv Campbell, Rick Allen, Joe Elliott, Phil Collen, Rick Savage.

I was a bit relieved. Because I knew I wouldn't have to suffer his pain and neither would he.

You then made *Adrenalize* as a four-piece. Good album, but not in the same league as *Hysteria*. Fair comment?
We coped without Mutt quite well, because we'd grown up a little bit. We used the tools that we'd developed, only now we were a bit more qualified and mature to make decisions. We had a stronger and more confident opinion on how we should be doing things. Mutt was in his studio in Guildford with Bryan Adams and we'd be in Dublin, talking every day, even to Bryan. But it wasn't as adventurous as *Hysteria*. It was more of a rock album, less experimental. It's like with Pink Floyd, to me *Adrenalize* was our *Wish You Were Here*, and *Hysteria* was our *Dark Side Of The Moon*.

That all changed for the next album, *Slang*, but that was more because of the arrival on the scene of cold, rainy grunge. Correct?
The landscape had completely changed. The fans that bought *Adrenalize* hadn't gone away, but there was a new generation of kids that came of record-buying age as MTV were showing videos by Nirvana, Alice In Chains, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden. We kept doing what we were doing but we knew things had changed.

Not so much, though, that you didn't stay in touch with the charts around the world. The single *Two Steps Behind* in 1993 was top-five in the US. *When Love And Hate Collide*, from the '95 *Vault* compilation, was a huge hit in the UK. I recall hearing you being interviewed on Radio One about it and you sounded so pleased – and surprised.
I remember talking to Jon Bon Jovi, and we were like: "Where the fuck are we gonna go now? What's going on?" Everybody was saying it's all over for you guys, and it just makes you go, okay, maybe the major rock bands rolled over in the seventies when punk came along, but we ain't gonna roll over that easily. It was like we had these little pockets of happiness that were enough to keep us going, doing what we do. We had the biggest hit we'd ever had in the UK by releasing a tune that went all the way back to the eighties, but in 1995.

***Slang* was different, though. Like you took the fight to the alt.rock crowd.**
When we went in to make *Slang*, we just knew for our own sake we couldn't make another *Adrenalize*, or even another *Hysteria*. We'd done the trilogy of huge production albums, we needed to cleanse ourselves and do something different. So we lost all the big, mad harmony stuff, just made it sound like it does when we bang it out live in the rehearsal room. We jokingly called the album Commercial Suicide when we were writing it. We were cleansing our souls musically, but at the same time we'd been put into this great position of having something else to write about. For the first time in our lives, collectively, we were going through birth, death, marriage, divorce. All these kinds of things that all grown-ups have to deal with at different times.

I know it's a polarising record. I've got friends that say it's the best thing we've ever done, and I know there's people out there that think it's the worst thing we've ever done. And then there's other people that are just indifferent to it – "Er, doesn't really sound like Def Leppard." Well, that was the point. If we'd made *Adrenalize* again we'd have been torn to shreds, so we might as well make a record that we really, really, really wanna make. We knew we'd been shunted to one side but we knew we would bounce back. We just had to bide our time, because we knew we weren't going away.

The pendulum swung back again with *Euphoria* in 1999 – an intriguing return to 'classic' Leppard. Why?
The music landscape was once again changing. I can see from an outsider's point of view: "Oh, they gave it a go with *Slang*

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Tripping the light fantastic: Def Leppard delivering the goods in late 2015.

and now they've gone back to tried and trusted." But we were just listening to what was going on, on the radio, we're reading stuff, we're picking the vibes up that everything seems to be going back to melody again, melody is not unfashionable any more. But it didn't have any balls, any power. We figured like, we've got both. And we know how to do it.

So when we came to *Euphoria* we just let ourselves go in any way we wanted, we didn't restrict ourselves. With *Slang* we did, we said we're not gonna do the typical Def Leppard things. But with *Euphoria* we didn't rule them out. If one came, we embraced it. Because it had been eight years since *Adrenalize*. That's a long time to have abandoned your main style of music. So we embraced it.

***Euphoria* also saw the return of Mutt, albeit only briefly.**

We were really happy with what was going on, and Mutt came back into the cycle. I don't know how or why. Just, Mutt wants to come over. Okay, great. He wasn't going to produce the record. He was just out of the studio when we were in the studio. So he came over, and Phil had got this idea for a song that was along the lines of a *Photograph*-type thing, which was *Promises*. The way that song developed from the way that we were developing it to Mutt coming in, it was like the old team back together again.

What was it like working with Mutt again in the studio?

Weird. It was a bit weird because he wasn't working the same way. He wasn't hands-on. He was more observant. He'd say: "Stop", and make a suggestion. It was weird for Vivian [Campbell, Clark's replacement], because it was the first time Vivian had ever worked with him, so for him it was a learning curve. We also wrote another song where we did kind of start from scratch. We said let's do something really off the wall. That ended up being the song *All Night* – all groovy noises and orgasmic sounds. It's fucking nuts.

And you've continued along that path, with your most recent albums all arriving as singular entities. Some instantly recognisable material, some more surprising. You seem to have found a great balance, especially on *X*, which was voted *Classic Rock's* album of the year in 2002, and *Songs From The Sparkle Lounge* in 2008, and of course *Def Leppard* in 2015, which was a seamless, immersive experience – pop, rock, you name it.

Deliberately so. Because that's just where we were at. We've reached a point where we don't actually have to make new albums any more. We do it because we want to. Our management is like, look, if you want to go and record and pay for it yourselves, then fine, knock yourselves out. So we do, and we treat it as we always have, going in just trying to make something the best we can. Except there's no pressure from record company people to finish it. No A&R people asking if we've written any hits. We don't do what we're told. We do what we feel. We'll live and die by our own decisions. That is the ultimate satisfaction of being an artist.

Is that how *Yeah!* came about? It was probably your least successful album commercially, but what fun hearing you do things such as Bowie's *Drive-in Saturday*.

It's the perfect Def Leppard song. A friend of mine who used to do backing vocals for David told me: "I sent David your version of the song and he loves it!" I'm like: "Fuck off!" He said it was one of the best versions of one of his songs he'd ever heard. I played [Leppard's version of Free's] *A Little Bit Of Love* to Paul Rodgers when Queen played Dublin, and he was raving about it. I had a really great conversation with [Spiders From Mars bassist] Trevor Boulder. I said: "You remember when you were doing *The Jean Genie*?" He said: "No. We did it in an hour and a half. The only thing I remember about *The Jean Genie* was we were standing at the bottom of the stairs at Wessex studios and the Faces walked past us going up the stairs. That's it" [laughs].

"*Adrenalize* wasn't as adventurous as *Hysteria*. It was more of a rock album, less experimental."

You've got a huge summer tour with Journey later this year, followed by your biggest UK tour for years. Looking forward to it?

I love it. Our audience is amazing, especially now. We get people coming saying they first saw us on the *Pyromania* tour, then got pregnant or moved away or something and had to stop, but have now started coming back, bringing their kids and their teenage kids with them. "I've now seen you fifty-six times, and forty of them have been this century." Like, wow, you know? Wild. ●

Def Leppard's catalogue is now available online. The band tour the UK in December playing Hysteria in full.

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MEN OF THE MOVEMENT

You've heard their songs, seen them live and they've just hit the Top 10 with their excellent third album. But just who are **The Temperance Movement**?

Words: **Polly Glass** Photos: **Will Ireland**

It all seemed so charmed. Back in 2011, a group of session players and one disenchanted solo artist decided to join forces and make music they all loved. As The Temperance Movement, they released a sublime debut of revitalised classic rock, almost by chance (it wasn't really meant to be an 'album' as such). It made the UK Top 20. They toured with the Rolling Stones. After recording a heavier, more boundary-testing second album, founding guitarist Luke Potashnik left to devote himself to studio work. Suddenly the dynamic shifted.

Frontman Phil Campbell, who'd been sober for several years, started drinking again. Drummer Damon Wilson left to spend more time with his family, cutting the original winning core even further. They cut ties with their management.

It all could've fallen apart. But with new album *A Deeper Cut* – in many ways a return to their softer roots – and two new members, their prospects look bright again. Songs weren't overthought, Campbell returned to his first love, the piano, for a number of tracks, and the whole band made a fresh start.

"The second album was just filled with pressure," Campbell says, "and I suppose that's what it sounds like. It's not a bad record, I love it and I enjoyed playing it. But I think for the third record we wanted to find exactly who we are."

So do we.

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TTM playing a session at the YouTube Space in London's King's Cross in February.

THE SHOWMAN
Phil Campbell
(VOCALS/KEYBOARDS)

"It's just showing off, it's a reaction, it's frustration screaming out," the tiny, wiry Glaswegian says, explaining the appeal of playing live.

We're talking at London's YouTube Space, where they'll be playing a session later. "It's the unleashing of voices and characters and fire and brimstone that I have in me that I don't ever get a chance to do, apart from when I'm on stage."

On stage, Campbell is a live wire of gesticulations and raw-throated cries. Off stage, today dressed in black, the Temperance Movement frontman is quieter but just as focused. He doesn't smile often, but when he does, his friendly but intense exterior warms considerably.

In a band consisting mostly of former session players, he's the one who had a solo career – competing against the likes of Damien Rice and David Gray in London. He returned to Glasgow after 15 years of disappointments and battles with substances. Accepting that it "hadn't worked" was hard, but his way out was The Temperance Movement, which allowed him to turn his angsty, introspective experience into fun.

"I don't want to be who I am on stage, really," he says. "Because who I am is someone who gets up at half-seven and feeds my daughter and gets her to nursery school, does a bunch of dishes and I'll go for a swim and come back and have lunch with my wife… I don't want to take that on stage. I want to act a bit."

The son of two churchgoing teachers, Campbell grew up with a piano in their house in Milton, Glasgow. He learned to play from listening to local groups such as Deacon Blue and Love And Money, as well as Elton John and Kate Bush. Oh, and Queen. "I loved Freddie Mercury," he smiles. "He's one of those singers that has taught me how to sing from the very core of yourself, and to project and to entertain."

He found the guitar when Radiohead and Oasis came along, but it was The Black Crowes who made the most lasting impression – as anyone who's heard TTM's debut or *A Deeper Cut* will attest. At 16, he started his first band with friends, where his voice became the standout feature. A record deal followed, but the group were ultimately doomed.

"I was the writer in the group and I didn't really share that with anybody else," he says. "And I wish I had. We were desperate to become U2. We couldn't understand why we weren't U2… I just jumped ship on everybody and took it all for myself, taking some of the songs and writing a load of other ones."

When he was 20 he moved to London. He spent his twenty-first birthday recording his first solo record at Matrix studios in Soho. "I wanted to be John Lennon one minute, Massive Attack the next, Jeff Buckley, Tom Waits…" he says. "I was very naïve and didn't really know what I was doing."

He says it was pride that kept him in London when that fell through and he worked stints in HMV and Tesco.

A few years later, a second chance at solo success also collapsed. Long-standing problems with drink and drugs (including cocaine, speed and ecstasy, though mainly marijuana) came to a head, which he puts down to "an anxiety that's always been there".

"Complete and utter loneliness is the lowest you'll get," he says of his worst points. "When you've bled everyone dry emotionally and… the feeling of being damned and unforgiven, and that sense of low self-esteem that comes from knowing that you've fucked up."

Having retreated to Glasgow, joining The Temperance Movement after a call from Luke Potashnik in 2010 was a turning point. The best decision he ever made, he says, although he did start smoking weed again when the band began touring seriously, blaming physical pain from singing. "And I liked being high on stage," he adds, matter-of-factly.

> "Never will I feel as good as when I've just sung for an hour and a half with The Temperance Movement."
> Phil Campbell

The drugs are no match for the natural high of performing, though. Campbell has been sober for a few months now, revitalised from writing and recording *A Deeper Cut*.

"Never will I feel as good as when I've just sung for an hour and a half with The Temperance Movement," he says earnestly, "and I'm exhaling afterwards and I know exactly who I am."

Substances may always be part of Campbell's story, but right now he seems to have stepped out of their shadow. This positivity has fed into new tracks such as the Little Feat-esque *Backwater Zoo*, which he wrote for his four-year-old daughter.

"That's the kind of song I want to write from here on," he enthuses. "There's been so much introspection in the work I did before and in The Temperance Movement, and it's been quite ▷

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Former session guitarists Matt White (James Morrison, Pete Doherty) and Paul Sayer (Ray Davies, Adele).

morose. I think it was from listening to far too much Tom Waits… But you can't always say: 'Oh, it's shit, isn't it?' That's kind of what I used to do. But you can also say 'it is great' and 'We're all here with the freedom to come to venues and watch bands play. Let's celebrate it while we can.'"

THE ENGINE ROOM
Paul Sayer
(GUITAR)

"We're a unit," says Paul Sayer, musing on why the band he co-founded has enjoyed success. "I think when you watch a band, you don't want to feel like you're watching five individuals – you're watching a band that's living and breathing as one thing. And that's what we're all into."

Sayer is an interesting split of unflashy pragmatism and fierce creativity. He's easy company, gives sensible answers to questions, and is the one distributing water bottles to the crew setting up for tonight's YouTube session.

"One of the most amazing things about the band is that we've stayed together," he says. "It's fucking awesome being in the band, and we're the luckiest people in the world, but there's also downsides to it. As a musician, your life is up and down a lot, but you carry on because you love the music that you're making so much."

For the Barnet-born guitarist – whose pre-TTM session career included stints with Ray Davies, Adele and British hip-hop artist Just Jack – his love of songs came early on. Splitting time between separated parents, he grew up on a melodious diet of West Coast and Laurel Canyon songwriters such as Jackson Browne, Joni Mitchell and Neil Young, plus 60s/70s rock staples like Free and Cream. The first gig he went to was Little Feat with his dad. "I probably saw them, like, eight times growing up. I'm a massive Little Feat fan."

By the time he got to secondary school – an "ordinary London school" where there happened to be a great culture for music – he was spending all of his lunchtimes playing and jamming with other students. From the age of 15, he was being smuggled in through the back doors of pubs to play in covers bands.

"My dad played guitar and I'd strummed a bit in primary school," he says. "But in the summer holidays between primary and secondary school I got a book at the library that came with a cassette, a *Teach Yourself Guitar* book, and all summer I studiously went through this book. So I was already into it by the time I came to school."

Post-school, he got into life as a session player, which he concedes had its fair share of ups and downs.

"Sometimes you play great music with great people, sometimes you play great music with horrible people, sometimes you play horrible music with great people, so you get the whole range," he reasons. "But the reason that The Temperance Movement exists wasn't because I was having a terrible time being a session musician, but it got to the point where I wasn't fulfilling my creative drive at all. And I just thought, along with the other guys when we all started it together: 'When you look back on all this in thirty years' time, do you want some records that you've made that are really you?'"

> **"Life is up and down a lot, but you carry on because you love the music that you're making so much."**
>
> Paul Sayer

THE QUIET ONE
Matt White
(GUITAR)

Tall, dark, sporting a suitably fashionable hat and leather jacket, Matt White looks the part of the trendy London musician. He's an affable, quietly confident guitarist and the most softly spoken member of the group. It's easy to see how he fitted into the session scene. And having been friends with TTM for years before he joined, he was a natural fit for the band.

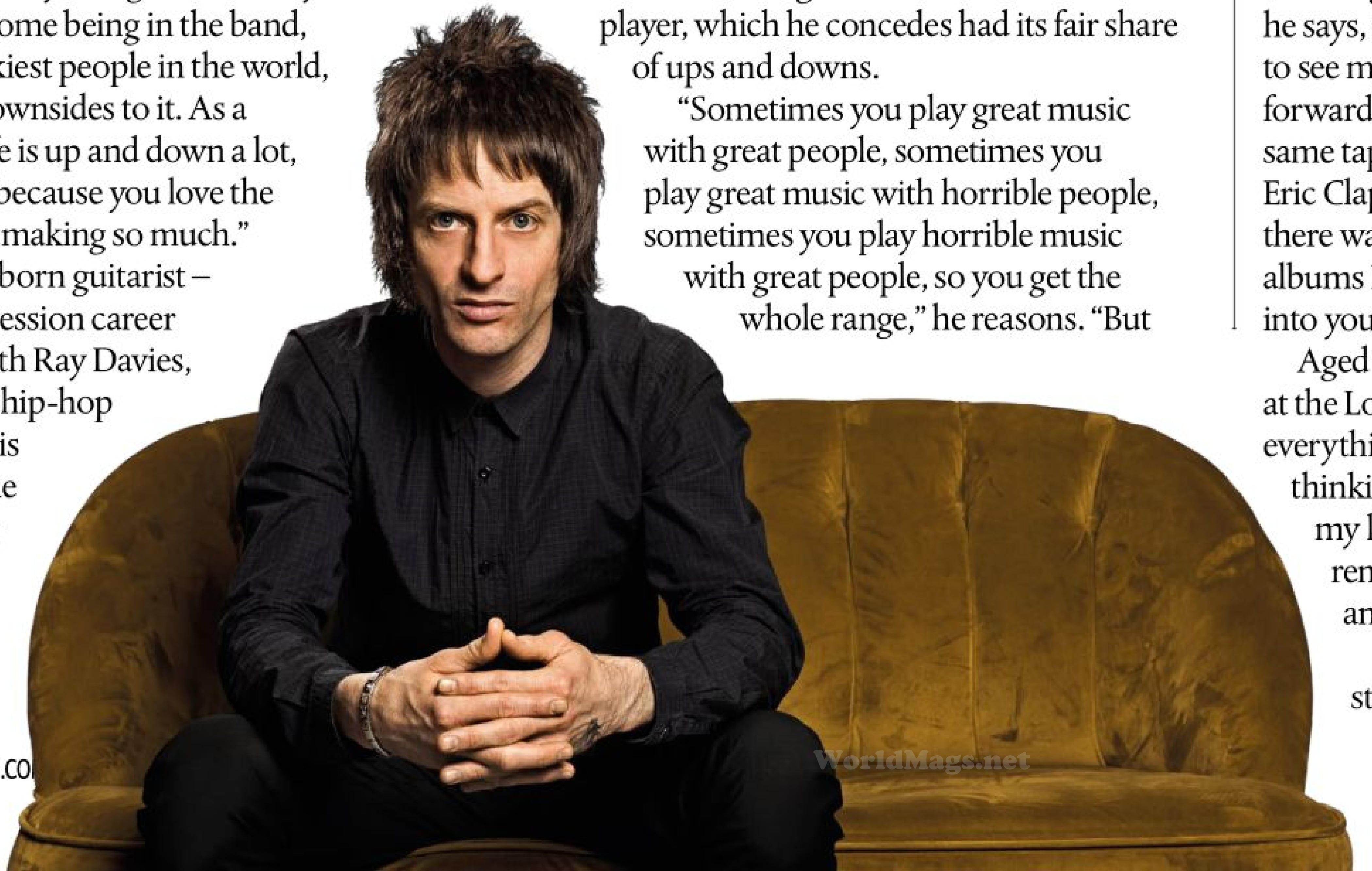
"If you're doing a good job and people like you and you get on well with people, the word spreads and suddenly you're a session musician almost by default," he says.

Now living in West London, White grew up in South Yorkshire, spending his formative years playing football, starting a local band and setting up market stalls. His parents were both nurses, and his father sold his record collection to help pay the rent when Matt was born. Not that this prevented his dad imparting some key rock'n'roll wisdom.

"You grow up on your dad's music, don't you?" he says, smiling. "Every weekend we used to drive to see my dad play rugby – he used to play prop forward for Barnsley – and he used to play the same tapes in the car every Saturday: there was an Eric Clapton Best Of, there was *Brothers In Arms*, there was a Pink Floyd tape, there were four or five albums I'd hear every week. And that just buries into your head."

Aged 18 he got a grant-funded offer to study at the London College Of Music, which changed everything. "One minute I was living in Barnsley, thinking I was gonna be there for the rest of my life, and suddenly I'm in London," he remembers. "It's almost like moving to another country."

Having made contacts in college, he soon started picking up **(Continued on page 45)**



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Drummer and TTM anchor Simon Lea (left) and former Jamiroquai and temporary Deep Purple bassist Nick Fyffe.

work, including shows with James Morrison and Pete Doherty. In 2005 he was nominated for an Ivor Novello award for the song *For Lovers* that he co-wrote for indie rockers Wolfman.

He first met TTM co-founder Paul Sayer through a friend's recommendation, when Sayer needed a guitarist to cover some of his gigs with Just Jack. They stayed in touch, and when TTM's original guitarist Luke Potashnik left after the *White Bear* album was recorded, White was an easy choice as replacement. Now, after two years of Temperance Movement gigs, he's understandably pleased to finally be on an album.

"Yeah, I had to wait two years to get to record with them!" he says with a chuckle. "That's why you join a band, so you can play your own music. This was the opportunity to do that."

THE 00s FUNK STAR
Nick Fyffe
(BASS)

The story goes that Nick Fyffe auditioned for a Jamiroquai tribute band before joining the genuine article in 1999. Then aged 26, the bassist had cut his teeth in an 11-piece funk group in Reading before moving to the capital. He answered an ad from a tribute act seeking a bass player, and while waiting for an audition, found out that the real Jamiroquai needed one too. Fyffe called their management and two auditions later, got the job.

"On the day I had a message from this guy from the tribute band saying: 'Hi mate, we've got auditions next week,' I called him back and said: 'I'm probably not gonna come for an audition any more.'"

Today a small, lithe father-of-two with long dark hair and a dry wit, Fyffe's life has changed a lot since his formative years in Reading. Born to a dancer mother and pianist father (who separated), Fyffe's childhood summers were spent in seaside towns where his father was a musical director for variety shows and pantomimes. There, the likes of Basil Brush and Keith & Orville were his first celebrity encounters.

"It was places like Eastbourne, Scarborough, Morecambe, and I'd spend my time in a theatre, hanging around waiting for my dad to finish the shows," he recalls. "And there was always a troupe of dancing girls that I'd fall in love with and then be heartbroken with when summer came to an end."

In school, an initial desire to be a drummer was replaced by wanting to play guitar, then playing bass came along as he started A-levels.

"Me and my mates had a band and we'd take it in turns to play the bass because no one wanted to play it," he explains. "And I just got into it. I got really into the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and started listening to bands like Parliament and Sly & The Family Stone."

Following a spell at St Martins School Of Art, he decided to try to make a go of it as a musician.

His pre-TTM life included a "rather bonkers" spell living with [Jamiroquai frontman] Jay Kay in his big country pile, a stint with Deep Purple (while Roger Glover was on paternity leave) and regular Sunflower Jam appearances alongside Robert Plant, Status Quo and others. These days he prefers fine tequila and cooking pizza to decadent excess.

"I had my fair share of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll," he says, grinning. "And I'm glad I've done it, because it's something that a lot of people strive for, and when you get there it's fun for a bit and then it's time to stop. I'm doing music now for all the right reasons, because I love playing and I love touring."

THE NEWEST MEMBER
Simon Lea
(DRUMS)

"He's like Forrest Gump!" Nick Fyffe beams, by way of an introduction to bandmate Simon Lea. "He just runs, he's like a machine. Every morning without fail. When you share a hotel room with Simon, generally you wake up and he's gone."

A no-bullshit guy with a wry sense of humour and lack of arty pretensions, Lea could be the stabilising anchor The Temperance Movement needed. He studied jazz at the Guildhall School Of Music And Drama, like most of his bandmates he's a former session man, and like White, he's been friends with the band for years.

Before joining TTM in December 2016 (replacing Damon Wilson, who left to spend more time with his family), Lea had been playing drums for the David Bowie musical *Lazarus* in London's West End. Prior to that he'd been all over the London session circuit, playing for Ronnie Wood, Boy George, Seth Lakeman and Just Jack, among others. "I got into funk really heavily, and so I was super into Ziggy Modeliste, The Meters drummer, and I transcribed all the Meters' back catalogue," he recalls. "And then I was really into Tony Williams, who played with Miles Davis, Elvin Jones, Jeff 'Tain' Watts… And I'm a huge John Bonham fan."

> **"I had my fair share of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, and I'm glad I've done it."**
> Nick Fyffe

Lea's taste for top-drawer jazz and rock has an unlikely origin. He grew up in Kent, where his father was a vicar, and Lea's gateway into drumming was his elder brother's band. After watching them rehearse in his father's church, his fate was sealed – even if the music didn't appeal.

"Awful Christian rock," he says, shaking his head. "It was terrible. But when you're tiny, you can barely sit on a drum stool, let alone play a kit. It was the most exciting thing I'd seen up until that point."

These days he's a father himself, his daughter arriving when he was 17 and struggling to make it as a musician. She's 27 now and Lea is with a different partner. "It was absolutely bonkers, scared the shit out of me," he remembers. "But it's worked out beautifully. It's a real success story."

Having seen The Temperance Movement's very first gigs, joining the band full-time has been another success story.

"I watched them go from having no audience, and rising to do all these things," he chuckles, "partly seethingly jealous but the other part so happy for them. So I'd always had my eye on them, and when Damon couldn't do some shows and I was offered them, I jumped at the chance."

A Deeper Cut is out now via Earache.

Survival Instinct

With their past dogged by tragedy, having lost two immensely popular singers, how did **Stone Temple Pilots** pick themselves up and this year return with an excellent new record?

Words: **Nick Hasted** Photos: **Ross Halfin**

September 2016. The three surviving original members of Stone Temple Pilots are in alien territory. With the Foo Fighters occupying their usual studio, Dave Grohl has lent them the Foos' 606 Studios in California's San Fernando Valley, with its owners' superhero-style 'FF' insignia all over the walls. The lights are dim and cameras rolling as, seven months into STP's search for the third singer of their tragedy-dogged career, 40-year-old former *X Factor* contestant Jeff Gutt steps up to the mic to give it his shot. Fifteen-thousand hopefuls have already been whittled down to nearly 50 the band are seeing personally, at a rate of three, seven-song auditions a day. Gutt grabs the mic to start with the STP song he knows least from the ones he's going to sing, *Piece Of Pie*. And the monitors won't stop screaming in his ears. "Apparently I sang a lot harder than the last guy," he recalls mildly today, reflecting on the first meeting with his prospective bandmates.

"I was sitting in this room with no one else there," he says of his arrival at 606, "noodling around with this guitar, when Dean [DeLeo, STP guitarist] heard it and walked in. And it was very strange to see their faces in person. It was like, woah! I've had people crying when they met me because I've been on TV, so I knew I couldn't be that way. But they've been mentors to me in so many ways that they still don't even know. It was like I already knew them. Not personally, but it was like joining Led Zeppelin in a way, where I know who Jimmy Page is. And I knew that I had what it took to do the gig. Because I'm here first for the band members, second for Scott and Chester, and third for me."

Stone Temple Pilots' first and definitive singer, Scott Weiland, sacked from the band in 2013 for addiction-based issues, died from a drug overdose on December 3, 2015. His replacement, Chester Bennington, who left STP that November to focus on Linkin Park, committed suicide on July 20, 2017. STP's recent past played a large part in Gutt getting the gig.

"It comes down to how we get along personally," says Dean DeLeo, as they ready for the release of a new, self-titled album co-written and sung by Gutt. "And that *means* something to me now. At this point in my life I just don't have time for anything but being free and creative and passionate. So yeah, we managed to get off on a good foot, man. We went on to spend the next year together before we gave Jeff the gig. And he deserved it."

DeLeo's need for the new STP to be a positive place is deeply understandable, given previous successive tragedies. "Look, man," he says with feeling. "The world and family and friends and children suffered two great losses. And I'm not talking about the kid who bought some records on tour. I'm talking about children here, and wives. That's harrowing, man. It's so tragic to lose a loved one. And I can't tell you I'm entirely healed from these losses. It's a tremendous amount of tragedy. I miss Scott a *lot*. On a daily basis."

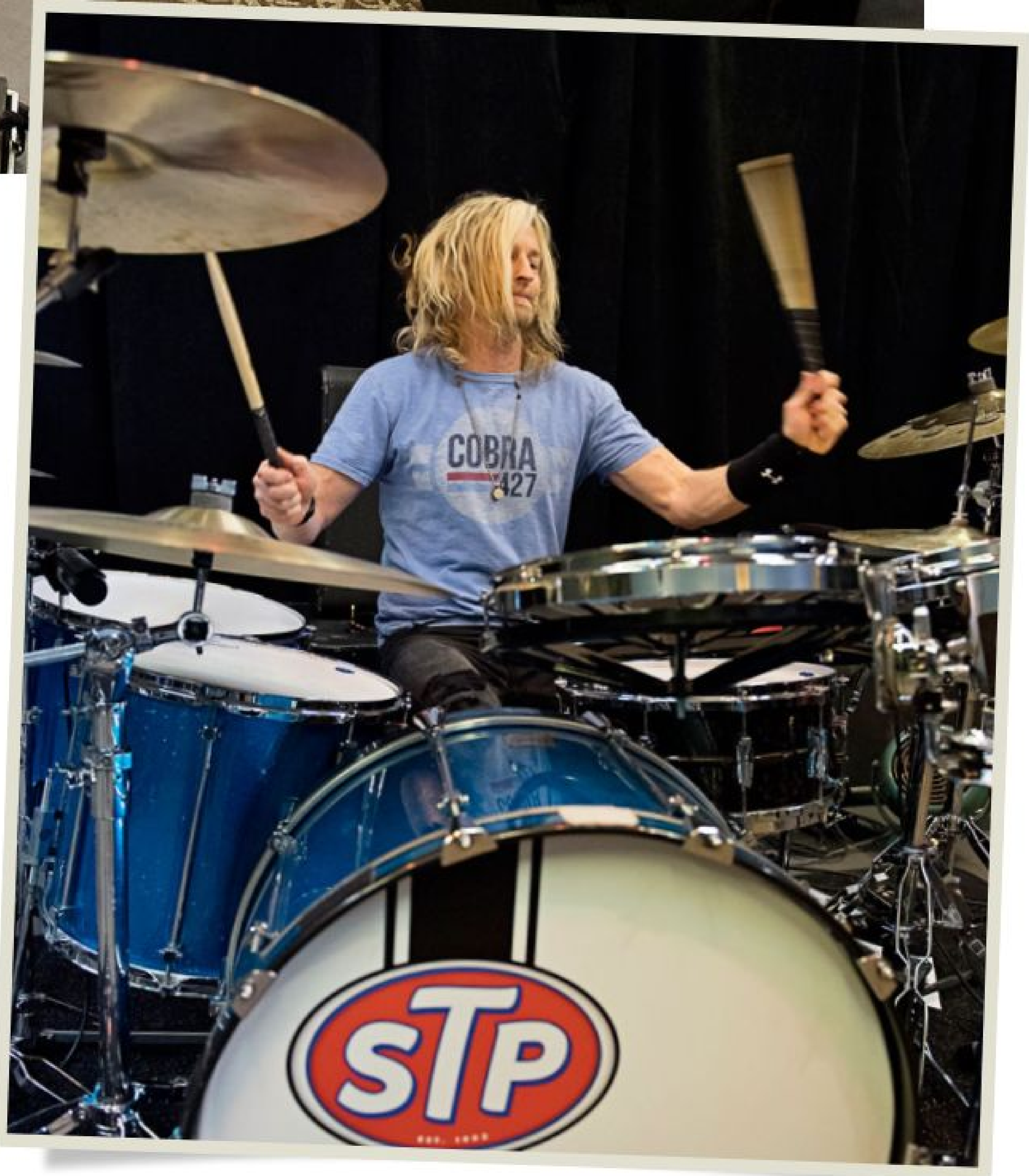
"It's very sad when you're caught up in the middle of success and commitment, and drug addiction and alcoholism," says bassist Robert DeLeo, Dean's younger brother. "And it's very sad looking at where we started as kids and the innocence that we had, and the determination, and to see where it went to. It's happened to many, many people in bands and in this industry.

"I was watching this Doors documentary the other night that Johnny [Depp] narrated [Tom DiCillo's *When You're Strange*, 2009]. And it's tough to watch, because I've experienced those moments. And I actually reached out to [Doors guitarist] Robby Krieger and said: 'It's amazing how our careers have very big parallels with each other.' I just wanted to console with someone who's been in that position with a very destructive singer. There's a moment in that movie where they're on stage and Jim [Morrison] walks away from the mic, and Robby is looking at Ray [Manzarek] like, 'What… what happened?' And a lot of times when I think about the past it's: 'What the hell just happened?'" ➢

"I can't tell you I'm entirely healed from these losses. I miss Scott a *lot*. On a daily basis."

Dean DeLeo

Robert (left) and Dean DeLeo (right), Eric Kretz (inset) and Jeff Gutt rehearse STP classics and new-album songs in LA.



Jeff Gutt's long road to joining Stone Temple Pilots began in St. Clair County, Michigan, "a very small town where local sports and things like that were the most important things". Like Robert DeLeo's teenage flight from the drudgery of New Jersey high school to California and a fateful meeting with Scott Weiland, Gutt looked to rock'n'roll for escape.

"My parents got divorced when I was really young," he recalls, "and I grew up at my dad's house, where I was always going over his records – everything from Simon And Garfunkel to *Thriller* to The Carpenters. And because he played guitar, when I was six I started playing. I didn't sing till I was in high school, around the time that *Core* [STP's debut, in 1992] came out. I always shied away from being the centre of the spotlight. I always wanted to be the guy on the side that wrote the songs. But the crowd response made me want to be a singer."

When Gutt found himself in the bizarre position of singing his own STP songs 25 years later, his teenage studying of *Core* had stayed with him.

"I learned from Scott that you can cater to each song using different colours and influences. That's the first thing I noticed when *Core* came out. And he got more like that as time went by."

Gutt's years singing in Detroit covers bands then expanded on this example to further useful effect.

"In covers bands, I would bring the flavour of why I think each singer's voice worked on that particular song, and fuse it with my own personality and voice. It's like being a method actor getting into each song's character. All of that came into play with STP, because I'd been singing songs like *Trippin' On A Hole In A Paper Heart* [from STP's *Tiny Music… Songs from the Vatican Gift Shop*] for years, and they were ingrained in me."

Gutt's high-school band Innerfaith and late-90s and early-2000s spells with briefly Warner-signed nu metallers Dry Cell went nowhere. He retreated from LA to Detroit, where The Band With No Name followed in 2005, their name a private, Prince-style turning of his back on a music industry whose margins had left him disgusted. His decision to compete in the American *The X Factor* for two seasons, in which he finished as 2013's runner-up, therefore seemed an about-turn.

While Dean DeLeo "didn't give a thought" to this 'credibility killer', Gutt has his own firm rationale.

"At that point I was thirty-six years old and raising my son in Michigan," he says. "And through teaching him the same things about music that my father did, I fell in love with it again. And I'd always despised those shows where people just wait in line for one day, and they get their shot. I've played bars and clubs for twenty years at that point. It was like: 'If I can go on one of those shows and show them what the "real deal" is, maybe it'll get my name out there.' And I made it more about my voice, I didn't have background singers and choreography. They gave me the rope to be my own person.

> "It's very sad looking at where we started as kids and the innocence that we had, and to see where it went to."
>
> *Robert DeLeo*

"My number-one musical hero – and I've never told anyone this – is Sixto Rodriguez, from [2012 documentary] *Searching For Sugar Man*. That'll explain who I am a lot more than trying to figure out my career, because of his humility, and never being bitter about not making it. He just moved on to other things, and didn't carry anger, which I did for a while. Being on *X Factor* with [show mentor] Kelly Rowland really taught me a lot about not looking back and being bitter about the past."

Gutt parlayed his TV fame into a new band, Rival City Heights, which soon became "one of the most amazing experiences of my life", with a 2015 tour of the Middle East and India on which they played to an audience of 4,000 in a ruined Roman amphitheatre in Jerash, Jordan, and 15,000 in Cairo.

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Joe Perry and Johnny Depp (inset, far left)) joined STP on stage in Pasadena on March 8, the third date of their first tour with Jeff Gutt.

With his own career at last taking off, when STP put out the call for a singer in February 2016 he barely noticed. It was only after a DJ friend mentioned his name to Robert DeLeo, and a curious Gutt eventually sent in a demo, that he found himself in the Foos' studio. From his TV experience with millions-strong audiences to a versatility forged in unknown bar bands, he arrived there ready.

"It's almost like the path has been lit for me for the last fifteen years of my life," he says. "Even the times I've failed and I've walked away from the music industry just to keep my own dignity. Having it come around that I'm the singer of STP blows my mind as much as anyone else's!"

Stone Temple Pilots, self-titled like their previous album (their last with Weiland) was recorded at Robert DeLeo and drummer Eric Kretz's homes. Gutt's appropriateness as a singer and as a person had soon been apparent, but he had a final hurdle to overcome.

"People were so concerned that we should get a known singer," says Dean DeLeo. "I just want a person that I feel comfortable being able to write songs with. The song *The Art Of Letting Go* was the turning point where, okay, you're going to be the singer in this band. We were at Eric's studio, and one of his kids' little toy guitars was sitting there. I was just plunking on some chords, and Jeff and I wrote that song in minutes. And that's what matters most to Rob and Eric and I. We wanted somebody that we could continue to make records with. When the four of us are together, to me it feels like it's supposed to."

"Having it come around that I'm the singer of STP blows my mind as much as anyone else's!"

Jeff Gutt

In 2014, *Classic Rock* spoke to another pair of rock veterans as they considered writing with their own new singer who had excelled in a talent show. Queen's Roger Taylor and Brian May have yet to do so with Adam Lambert, and anyway conceded that it could never match their crucial creative tension with peer and equal Freddie Mercury.

"Jeff and I have had our moments," Dean says, countering this argument. "He's not someone to bow down. I've been in situations where I've had to walk into other people's worlds, and it can be intimidating. Jeff showed a lot of confidence, while also exercising humility. And that's a real fine line."

The lightning sparks of glam that put *Core* beyond the glowering grunge latecomer it was widely derided as had blazed into Technicolor life by STP's third album, *Tiny Music… Songs From The Vatican Gift Shop* (1996). The new album continues the brightly benign, diverse strain of classic rock that even 2010's Weiland swansong managed.

"This was an opportunity to use all the things I'd learned and put them together," says Gutt. "It was like I was made for this moment. And it was a chance for their story and my story to come together. And they're both very beautiful stories."

The song *Finest Hour* seems to address Weiland's death, as Gutt sings emotionally: *'You never said goodbye/It left a void that's like no other… I miss you brother/I hope you know it.'* In fact, Gutt says it's "about losing a brother", likely his beloved brother-in-law, who died in 2016. But the lyric is left open enough to speak to the band's loss.

"There's definitely a lot of resilience put into this record," Robert adds. "If I had spoken to you four years ago and you'd said that this chain of events was going to happen, I probably wouldn't have believed you. And when you have the gift of writing music, how could you not feel for people who were a huge part of your life?"

Continuing with Stone Temple Pilots is because of their need to move forward, Robert says, and also to carry the past three decades with them as they also play their old music again. "This is a very big part of my life," he considers. "Whether I like it or not. There is definitely an honouring, and desire to perform these songs still."

Even away from band work, STP's surviving original members still talk all the time. "We're kind of like each other's therapists," says Robert. "I know exactly what really happened and how we feel and how things went. People don't really need to know. But we can at least console with each other about what we've done and what we're going to do."

Still, three singers and two tragic deaths in, keeping Stone Temple Pilots going seems like it must have been a hard, bruising task.

"Well yeah," says Dean. "But once we parted ways with Scott [when he was fired in 2013], it wasn't quite as hard. In a perfect world… I wish we were in a perfect world. But we're just talking about a stupid band, man, and music, and getting all philosophical. It just goes to show that life means so much more than some fucking band. You know what I mean? Life is so precious, man. And it haunts me that these men are not here to experience this any more. And Stone Temple Pilots, who fucking cares?"

But as music and people, Dean loves Stone Temple Pilots to his bones. "To be affiliated with this band, even back when we were making records with Scott, it sure was fulfilling, man," he sighs. "It was so fulfilling having a guy like Scott to write with. And I know that we have so much more in the tank."

Stone Temple Pilots is available now via Atlantic/Rhino.

EMOTIONAL RESCUE

The White Buffalo (aka Jake Smith) is touching people with his "human stories", songs woven from resonant lyrics and a blend of rural folk, punk, rock and more.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

"Writing in a narrative style is kind of a dying art," offers singer-songwriter Jake Smith. "But for me it seems like the best palette to create human stories that have bigger ideas around them. I try to hit each emotional core, whether it be sorrow, happiness, love or fear. I really want to take things to their thematic and emotional limits."

As The White Buffalo, Smith has been creating what he calls "mini-movies" in song for the past 16 years. His latest album, *Darkest Darks, Lightest Lights*, is a consummate expression of his gift for detailing the rich drama of human life in its many forms, throwing up memorable characters caught in critical situations. That Smith is able to make his subjects sound so real – be it the boozy and bitter protagonist of *Avalon* or the bank-job rogues in *Robber* – is partly down to the weighty authority of his deep baritone voice. It's a perfect vehicle for his blend of rural folk, punk and roughhouse rock, operating at the intersection of Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Cash and Steve Earle.

Heavyset and over six feet tall, with a loose mane and thick beard, Smith looks like the kind of weathered mountain-man of American myth. Not for nothing did he hit on his White Buffalo moniker. "It seemed to make sense," he's explained in the past, "because I'm a big white motherfucker and it created some mystery".

In truth, however, he's soft-spoken and thoughtful, answering *Classic Rock*'s enquiries with an air of easy, considered grace. The songs that pour out of him are, he says, reflections of the dual nature of life itself: "It's been that way throughout my whole thing. Nothing is ever straightforward. I like conflict, there's always this grey area to explore. *Avalon*, for example, is about this guy who's making some bad life choices and is struggling, hoping for this miracle turnaround. He has this delusional idea of changing his life."

"I try to hit each emotional core, whether it be sorrow, happiness, love or fear."

One of the more autobiographical moments on *Darkest Darks, Lightest Lights* is *Nightstalker Blues*. The song recounts the horrific exploits of Richard Ramirez, a serial killer and rapist who terrorised Los Angeles and the Bay Area from 1984-'85. Set to a brutal punkabilly thump, the lyrics recount the panic and dread of the 10-year-old Smith, who grew up in the LA suburb of Huntington Beach.

"It was difficult to revisit that," he says. "I was pretty uneasy for days after studying it, going over the gory details of his thought processes and actions. But I wanted to be as real and honest as I could. It's partially about me and partially about him; about the fear and paralysis when he was on that rampage. It was a pretty scary time as a child."

By his own admission, as a musician Smith was something of a late starter – he didn't pick up a guitar until he was 19 or 20. Songwriting took a while to take hold, too, but his musical education was already underway.

"My parents were big country music fans," he explains, "so we'd have family outings to go and see people like Tammy Wynette, George Jones and Randy Travis. I probably went to over fifty country concerts as a kid. It wasn't until high school, when I started to get into punk, that I made a full switch to that scene and went to see bands like Bad Religion and NOFX. Just absorbing all that stuff ended up influencing how I approach music today."

Discovering the works of John Prine, Townes Van Zandt and Bob Dylan helped steer him in the right direction.

"I landed on songwriters who could really move me," he says. "The first band I was in were totally terrible. We were called Living Room, and it was me and two guys who wanted to be a punk band, but it just didn't come out that way. Instead it was this marriage of all these different genres. It wasn't straight punk and it wasn't straight country, it was somewhere in between those things."

Smith started out by recording his songs onto cassettes and handing them out to family and friends. As the tapes began to circulate, one song (*Wrong*) reached pro surfer Chris Malloy, who used it in the 2001 surf film *Shelter*. This in turn led to an offer from surfing apparel company Hurley to help finance Smith's 2002 debut album *Hogtied Like A Rodeo*. "It was all very slow-building though," he points out. "I was still playing in the corner of a restaurant in Orange County to five people."

A bigger breakthrough arrived in 2010 when Smith's lawyer, a major fan of the TV series *Sons Of Anarchy*, asked the show's music supervisor to consider The White Buffalo for the soundtrack. They ended up using several of his songs, including the Emmy-nominated co-write *Come Join The Murder*, for the series-seven finale. Smith's compassionate tales of outliers and troubled souls were ideally suited to a drama about a Californian biker gang. "The show features bad men doing bad things, but they also have hearts and are very human," Smith offers. "So they're very conflicted, which fits in with a lot of the stuff I write."

Smith's career was gaining traction as well, slowly but surely. After 2008's *Hogtied Revisited*, a re-recorded update of *Hogtied Like A Rodeo*, the White Buffalo's second album, *Once Upon A Time In The West*, finally arrived in 2012, serving as a wider introduction to his literate country blues and rockist rumble. He's hardly looked back since, even inspiring a 10-part documentary series from Ernie Ball and a White Buffalo tribute band, Into The Sun.

"I always stayed the course," Smith says, reflecting on leaner times. "I felt that what I was doing was valid and never entertained the idea of giving up. And I guess now, after six albums or whatever, I can happily call myself a singer. People come up to me after shows and thank me for helping them through a dark time or just for what I create, knowing that they're not alone in their situation when they need a little push. They feel there *is* some light after the darkness, that things can get better. That's really the whole purpose of what I'm doing."

The White Buffalo plays UK shows from April 15 to 21. For full dates, *see Listings, p111.*

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The White Buffalo: detailing the rich drama of human life in its many forms.

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"JUDAS PRIEST IS THE MOST RELEVANT METAL BAND IN THE WORLD TODAY"

So says frontman Rob Halford. Some may disagree, and some may even snigger, but the band's new album *Firepower* confirms that the veterans still occupy a lofty rung in the hierarchy of the genre they helped define.

Words: **Dave Everley**

PAUL HARRIES/ICONICPIX

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Judas Priest: (l-r) Scott Travis, Ian Hill, Rob Halford, Richie Faulkner, Glenn Tipton.

Rob Halford does a mean Arnold Schwarzenegger impression. Granted, the Austrian Oak is right down there with Michael Caine, Darth Vader and "Oooh, Betty" in terms of entry-level imitations, but it's still amusing to hear the man who has long worn the mantle of Metal God with pride busting out a 'mittel'-European rumble mid-conversation.

It's the second week of January and Halford is musing on the limitations of an otherwise stellar 45-year career as the singer with Judas Priest. Not so much what he's done as what might have been: a country album; a parallel career as a Vegas-style crooner; a chance for this one-time theatre student to revive his long-dormant acting chops. The kind of things that float around the head of your average leather-clad heavy metal icon at four in the morning when he can't sleep. The kind of things he could never do in real life because, well, he's the singer in Judas Priest.

"I've still got things I'd like to try to do at some point," he says, "just for my own pleasure. But then I'm also totally dedicated to Judas Priest, to this thing we've built over nearly fifty years." He laughs. "Oh God, has it been that long?"

It certainly has. In 2018, these old gods mark their 50th anniversary, a landmark that would give anyone reason to pause and take stock. Halford himself joined the band in 1972, and apart from a 12-year break throughout the 90s and early 00s when he embarked on a solo career, he's been fervently committed to the twin causes of Judas Priest and heavy metal ever since.

There are more pressing matters than the band's looming golden jubilee, though. Halford is on interview duty, alongside Priest guitarists Glenn Tipton and Richie Faulkner, to talk up *Firepower*, the band's new album, their eighteenth. In truth it doesn't need a whole lot of talking up. *Firepower* is a contender for the best thing they've done since Halford came in from the cold a decade and a half ago, and by extension the best thing since 1990's career-reviving *Painkiller*.

Listening to Halford, it sounds like Judas Priest are enjoying being Judas Priest more than they have in a long time. Whether the bombshell that's about to be detonated shortly after we talk will change that is anyone's guess.

It's mid-afternoon in Phoenix, Arizona, where Halford has lived, on and off, since the early 80s. He likes the city for its climate, its friendliness and its music scene. In a couple of days' time he'll attend a show by his friend Marilyn Manson, whom he has known since the 90s. You'll be hard-pushed to name another of rock's elder statesmen willing to venture out to a 2,000-capacity club gig on a Wednesday night. But then Halford isn't your average elder statesman. In fact, it's a term he's not entirely comfortable with.

"I've got mixed feelings about it," he says. "There's some respect there, but it also says your best work is behind you and that you're no longer relevant: 'Oh no, that's that old band Priest from forty years ago.' I never want to hear that. This band is just as relevant as any other new band out there." There's a pause for dramatic effect. "Judas Priest is the most relevant metal band in the world today. You can put that in large print." Then he laughs. "That was quite serious, wasn't it?"

It was. But then few bands take the business of heavy metal quite so seriously as Judas Priest. Any suspicion of a knowing wink is far outweighed by the obvious respect they hold for the genre they helped define and then refine during that glorious six-year period between 1976's *Sad Wings Of Destiny* and 1982's *Screaming For Vengeance*.

"I love being a metal singer more than anything else in the world," says Halford. "I still feel there's another metal song to do. That's important to us. That's what keeps us driven."

That much is evident on the new album. After predecessor *Redeemer Of Souls* put the train back on the tracks after the epic derailment of 2008's over-reaching *Nostradamus*, *Firepower* cranks the pistons as fast as they'll go. Halford credits Andy Sneap, who co-produced the album with returning Priest collaborator Tom Allom, for pushing the band as far as they would go during the making of it.

"God, Andy 'Do It Again' Sneap," Halford sighs, jokingly. "I'd go: 'How many fucking times can I sing this line?' And he'd say: 'You've not got it yet.' I came out of the studio like a dead dog. I couldn't wait to get home and watch *Coronation Street*."

Halford's singing voice may be impervious to the march of time, but his body is showing signs of wear and tear. In recent years he's undergone a hernia operation, and a procedure to correct a serious back problem that could have left him permanently wheelchair-bound.

It's seven years since Priest announced that they intended to retire from heavy-duty gigging. 2011's Epitaph tour was pitched as their swansong – something greeted with a mixture of disappointment and understanding by fans. By 2015 they were back out on the road again in support of *Redeemer Of Souls*. They'll be touring this year on the back of *Firepower*. So much for stepping back from life on the road.

"Yeah, whatever," Halford says dismissively. "We talk a load of rubbish sometimes. When you're coming to the end of a world tour, you're like: 'Oh my God, we've got all these other shows to do and I can't get out of bed. Poor, poor me.' And then you get home at the end of it and two weeks later you're thinking: 'Fucking hell, I'm going out of my mind here. Give me something to do.' And so you start writing music, and it all happens again."

He says this with enthusiasm rather than exasperation. As he points out, there are worse jobs to have at the age of 66 than singing in a rock band, especially when you consider the alternative. We're speaking a few days after the death of former Priest producer Chris Tsangarides ("A lovely fella, one of the good guys"). A week later comes the announcement that Dave Holland, the band's former drummer, has passed away. ▷

JUSTIN BORUCK/PRESS

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Richie Faulkner and Rob Halford with Priest at the Palms Casino Resort, Las Vegas, November 14, 2014, during the *Redeemer Of Souls* tour.

Firepower co-producer and now Priest touring guitarist Andy Sneap.

"It's obviously sad and upsetting, all these people we're losing," he says. "And of course it gets you thinking. But we're dealing with the inevitable."

Do you think about what your legacy will be when you're gone?

[A pause] "In all honesty, no. Should I? I don't know. It'll be what it will be at the end, whenever the end comes."

When Richie Faulkner landed the gig as guitarist in Priest, he went out and got hammered. "Well, you would, wouldn't you?" he says, not unreasonably.

Seven years and two albums after he replaced KK Downing, Faulkner is still the new boy in the band. It's a tag that will trail behind him until they eventually split up or grind to a halt, whichever comes first. But if he's overawed by the weight of history hanging over him, the garrulous Londoner doesn't show it. "I grew up with Priest, I knew what it meant," he says. "But when you get a chance you grab the bull by the horns."

Still, the man that Priest's other guitarist, Glenn Tipton, says has "rejuvenated the band, to a certain extent" admits that there's an element of surrealism to the fact he's a member of Judas Priest. Faulkner had been through a string of little-remembered bands in the 90s and 00s: Dirty Deeds, Voodoo Six, the Lauren Harris Band. A part of him was starting to wonder if it was ever going to happen for him.

"I was thirty, I still had time to get out of the industry, do something else," he says. "It was definitely coming up to a point where I was thinking about that."

Faulkner was asleep at home when he got the call asking if he was interested in trying out for the guitarist spot. "I was like: 'Who's calling me at this time?' And it was Judas Priest's management. I was awake like a shot."

> **"I COULDN'T WAIT TO GET HOME AND WATCH *CORONATION STREET*."**
>
> ROB HALFORD ON BEING KNACKERED MAKING *FIREPOWER*

The whole process took a couple of weeks. It involved running through old Priest songs, exchanging ideas, generally being sussed out for his suitability. The deal was sealed over tea and biscuits at Tipton's house. Faulkner was fully aware what he was signing up for: a band who, for all their fire, were closer to the end than to the beginning. His first outing as a member of Priest was on the Epitaph tour, the retirement that never was.

There have been reminders of that since. He remembers pushing Halford around New York in a wheelchair just after he'd had his operation. "Of course, you worry," he says. "At that age it takes a lot longer to heal. But you look at Rob's performances recently, he's more and more mobile. He always bounces back. Rock'n'roll keeps you young."

Faulkner has never met KK Downing, whom he replaced in Judas Priest, but there have been polite exchanges over Twitter. "I didn't do anything, he knows that. But we've never spoken to each other face-to-face. I'm sure it'll happen one day."

Right now, Faulkner says, it's eyes forward. Rather than trade solely on the past, Priest are striving to remain contemporary. "I can't see anyone retiring any time soon," he says. "As long as the guys want to do it, and as long as they're healthy, they'll do it. They've still got that glint in their eye."

If there's a glint in Glenn Tipton's eye, it's one of caution. The guitarist is the ice to Rob Halford's fire. Or, in Halford-approved *Coronation Street* terms, the Stan Ogden to the singer's Hilda. Where the singer is open and funny, Tipton is quiet and not given to outbursts of voluble emotion. His undiluted West Midlands accent lends him an air of dolefulness. He sounds like a man who would rather be standing by a river, armed with a fishing rod, than talking to a journalist (this is no coincidence: he's an avid angler).

Tipton was the last of Priest's classic line-up to join the band. He came on board in 1974, turning them from a single-guitar band into the twin-axe juggernaut of renown. Between them, he and Downing drew the blueprint that every two-guitar heavy metal band still abides by today.

"In all honesty, we weren't thinking that we were changing things," he says. "We just sat down and we wrote songs. And the best ones made it on the albums, and that was it."

Priest came of age at a time when music history was being written every day. "Oh, it was wonderful," Tipton says. "There were no rules. [Pause] Not in our rule book, anyway. [Longer pause] So we didn't have a rule book, if you like." Even he can't help but crack a smile at this.

But there have been plenty of less than wonderful times since then, chief among them the departures of Halford in 1993 and Downing in 2012. The boat was rocked each time, but it didn't capsize. Both Halford and Downing turned out to be replaceable, the former temporarily by Tim 'Ripper' Owens, the latter apparently permanently by Faulkner. Instead, it was Halford's recent health issues that brought Priest as close as they've ever come to an extinction-level event. Understandably, Tipton can't help but be concerned about his bandmate's health.

"Obviously we worry about him," he says. "Not just as the singer of the band, but as a lifelong friend. He really did suffer with his back. Even Rob thought: 'This is it. I can't walk on stage like this.' His back would lock up and he'd be bent over double in agony. You can't go on tour with a back like that."

ANDY SNEAP: GOBINDER JHITTA; MAIN: GETTY

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Surgery corrected his back problem, but it also acted as a stark reminder that time waits for no man, not even members of Judas Priest.

"We're all getting on, so at any given moment anything could happen," Tipton says. "That's a bit morbid, but people have been dropping like flies in the last couple of years." He emits a dry laugh. "You never know what's around the corner."

Events like that must make you reflect on your own mortality.

"Without a doubt," he says. "On your life, your family, your loved ones, how much time you dedicate to the band as opposed to being with the family. You shouldn't let music take over your life so you're not enjoying these other qualities of life."

Have you thought about what the future holds for Judas Priest beyond *Firepower*?

"Of course. But who knows? When you think about Rob leaving, or getting Richie in… Who knows, I might be the next one to step down. I'm sure I'm replaceable."

I'm sure you're not.

"Well, you don't know what's around the corner," he says. "At my age, in all honesty, I've got to get through the next tour before I decide what's next. What will be will be. It's in the hands of the gods."

It's a strange thing to say for a man as reserved as Tipton. What he isn't letting on – or maybe at this point he doesn't know – is that he is soon to drop a bombshell that will change the make-up of Judas Priest forever.

Locks 'n' licks: KK Downing (left) and Glenn Tipton on Priest's '86 *Turbo* tour.

A few weeks after we spoke, the gods made their decision. Or rather Glenn Tipton did. On February 11, the guitarist announced that he was to step back from touring with the band he joined 44 years ago.

It transpires that Tipton has been battling Parkinson's disease for the past 10 years. A degenerative disorder that attacks the central nervous system, it had gradually affected his ability to play. "He can still play guitar," Halford told *The Quietus* website a few days after the announcement, "but when it comes to some of the more challenging songs… that's when it's just becoming a little more difficult."

In a statement released by the band, Tipton stressed that he has not left Priest, just that his "role has changed". His place on stage will be taken by Andy Sneap, the man who co-produced *Firepower* – a role that could now be seen as an audition for this eventuality.

"WE WEREN'T THINKING THAT WE WERE CHANGING THINGS, WE JUST SAT DOWN AND WE WROTE SONGS."

GLENN TIPTON ON EARLY PRIEST

Like Faulkner seven years before him, Sneap is a sound choice. A working musician before he became a successful producer – Sneap played guitar in cult British thrashers Sabbat – he's got the experience and the reputation to step into such a big role.

That doesn't alter that fact that Judas Priest are a changed beast. Halford and bassist Ian Hill are now the only remaining members from their early days. But Tipton's departure, even if it's just from touring, is part of something bigger. It's another marker of an era that is slowly but inexorably passing. Rock's original architects are hanging up their guitars and stepping back, or worse. One by one, those old gods are vanishing. Whether there are any new gods ready to replace them is another question entirely.

Priest aren't done yet, not if Halford has anything to do with it. Rewind back to our conversation at the start of January, and he's looking to the future determinedly. "I thrive on this," he says. "It's great and stimulating, and I love it."

There are no specific plans when it comes to celebrating the band's impending 50th anniversary, although given subsequent events, a guest onstage appearance from Tipton wouldn't be a ridiculous suggestion. But Halford is confident that *Firepower* isn't a full stop. "There will be another Priest album, I know there will," he says.

There's another, more personal landmark on the horizon too: the singer turns 70 in a little over three years' time. The idea of a septuagenarian Metal God is…

"Thank you very fucking much," he says mock huffily. Then he's serious again. "I've already thought about this. I am going to be on stage somewhere in the world, hopefully in my own country, on my seventieth birthday, screaming the fuck out of *Painkiller* [laughs]. You can put that on the front page of *Classic Rock*."

Old gods they may be, battered by the winds of time, but Judas Priest are far from dead yet.

Judas Priest headline Bloodstock on August 10.

World of leather: (l-r) KK Downing, Ian Hill, Rob Halford, Dave Holland and Glenn Tipton in 1980.

TOP: ROSS HALFIN; BOTTOM: GETTY

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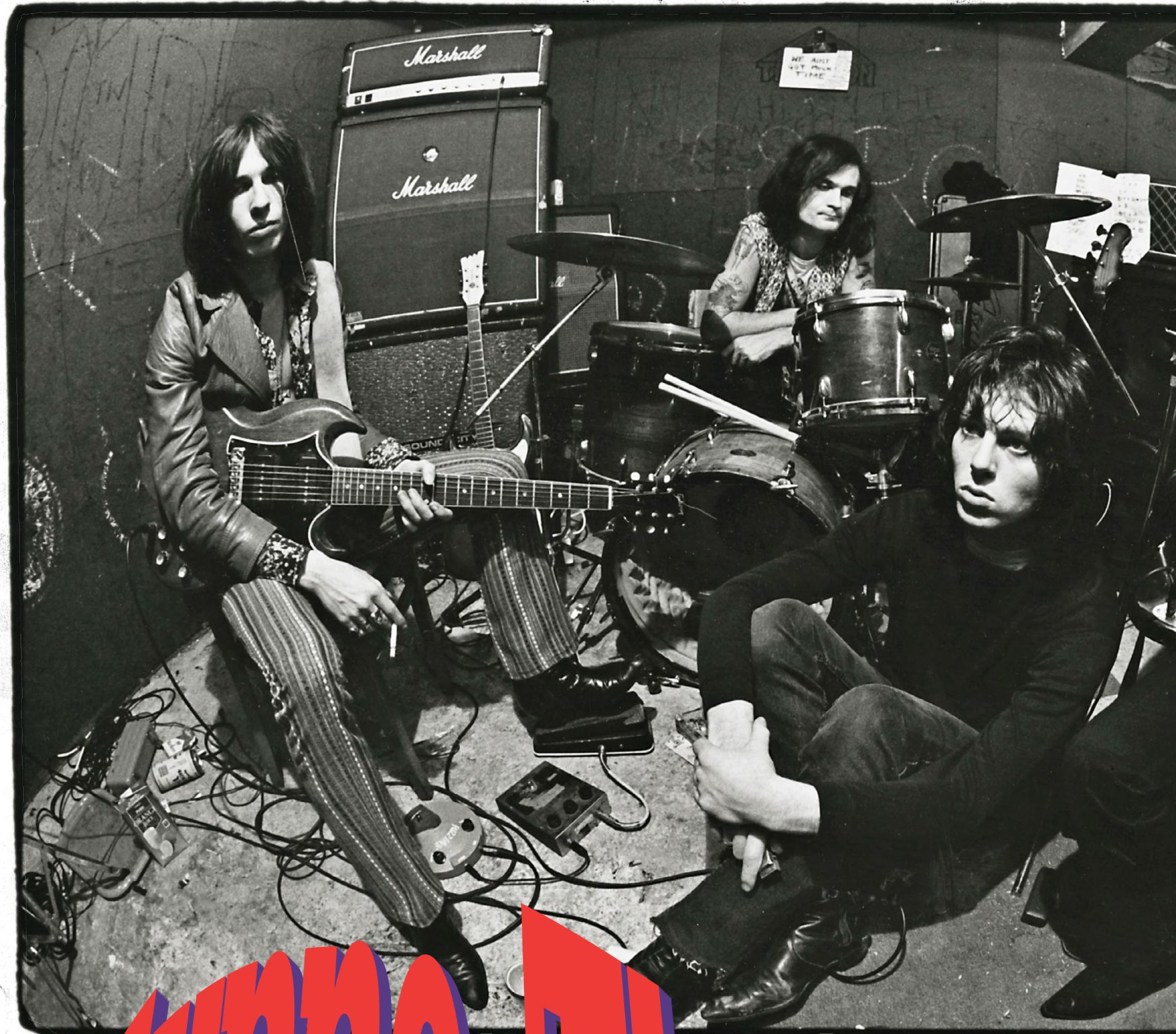

Hypno-Therapy

In the late 80s, with "one foot in Blue Cheer and one foot in the punk side of Led Zep", **Thee Hypnotics** were a band out of time. Now they're back to save us again.

★★★★★★★★★★★ Words: **Ian Fortnam** ★★★★★★★★★★★

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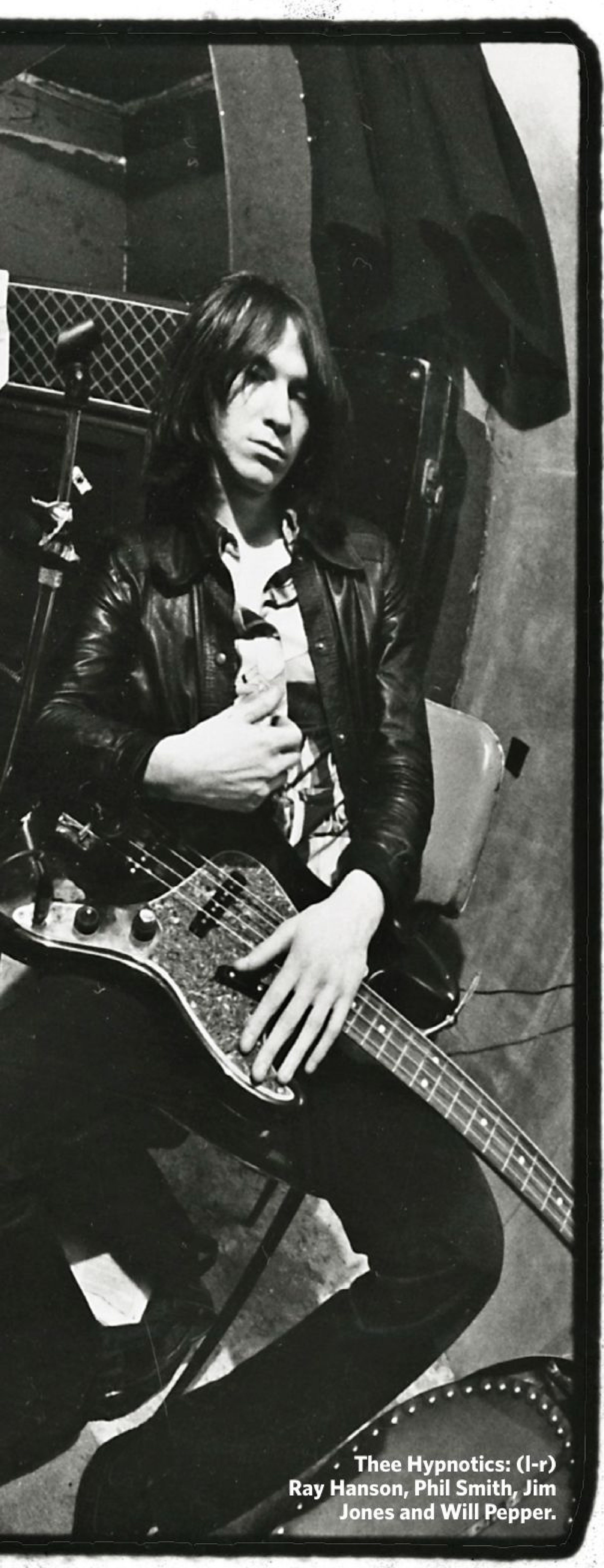
Thee Hypnotics: (l-r) Ray Hanson, Phil Smith, Jim Jones and Will Pepper.

Stumbling upon Thee Hypnotics in the flossy, insipid doldrums of the late 80s was like locating a shaft of dazzling clear white light in a seemingly impenetrable murk of corporate spandex compromise. As the broader rock cosmos was becoming ever more mainstream, sonic insurrection was exploding from the stage of London's Marquee club. Super-fuzzed waves of wah-wah tore rips in the ozone, as a bluff, curtain-fringed assassin sprayed aural ack-ack from his hip-slung guitar across a spiralling, intertwining Mitch-'n'-Noel-style rhythm. Meanwhile, nostrils flaring, Jim Jones is walking on the outstretched hands of a baying, sweat-slicked, packed throng. This is obviously no mere gig, no mere band, this is a clear testimonial to the dark, evangelical power of diabolic, soul-searing rock'n'roll. The sound of salvation, brothers and sisters.

How apposite, then, that recently reunited Thee Hypnotics vocalist Jim Jones and guitarist Ray 'Sonic' Hanson originally met in church. Dragged there by their respective parents, a shared conspiratorial glance across the pews initiated an enduring partnership nurtured at secondary school and bonded by a mutual devotion to a specific strain of countercultural authenticity.

Thee Hypnotics' rich bouillabaisse of influence represented a broad church of rock'n'roll attitude: the seditious ferocity of The Stooges and MC5; the movies of Scorsese and Cassavetes; the alternative rock gospel of Lux, Ivy, *Nuggets* and *Pebbles*; the words of Kerouac and Fante; the junk couture of Thunders and Carrol; the otherworldly otherness of Hendrix; the unimaginable glamour of Warhol's Factory; the excesses and Dionysian oblivion of the *Cocksucker Blues* Stones; all flash-fried in punk immediacy, leather-clad, flared, intoxicated, overdriven, steeped in languorous opiated sexuality and projectile regurgitated at Blue Cheer volume into a world that wouldn't listen.

Not to say that Thee Hypnotics were completely alone in their quest to rekindle the flame of rock authenticity. The band (originally completed by bassist Will Pepper and drummer Chris Dennis) came from High Wycombe where, Jim Jones remembers: "There wasn't a shred of the things we were getting excited about musically, but it gave you something to kick against."

Kicking their way to London in search of kindred spirits, the quartet found a zeitgeist in thrall to bedsit indie and the MTV-friendly Sunset Strip fancy dress of what Jones likes to call "Jack 'n' Coke live action role-play rock". But, operating beneath the media's radar, an underground psych scene offered welcome subterranean succour.

"In eighty-seven, when we did our first single [*Love In A Different Vein* b/w *All Night Long*], we did the rock'n'roll ecstasy clubs," recalls Ray Hanson.

Before being widely adopted by mainstream rave culture, much of the first MDMA to hit the UK was being used on the metropolitan neo-psychedelic scene. "At club nights like Alice In Wonderland [Monday nights at Soho's Gossips]," says Jones, "but Kerouacs in Hackney was a bit more hard-core, garage-y, sleazy and tough."

Thee Hypnotics had found their audience.

With authenticity always at a premium, Thee Hypnotics gigged hard and released a further brace of 12-inch singles (1988's *Justice In Freedom* and the following year's *Soul Trader*) on Beggars Banquet subsidiary Situation Two, before, in classic MC5 fashion, opening their album account with a verité performance recording, the ever formidable *Live'r Than God*. It captured a band on fire, combining power, passion and immediacy with an acolyte's attention to detail.

Contemporary observers witnessing those particular Hypnotics were stunned by what they saw. The band's brash ferocity belonged to another era; theirs was an unashamedly analog, swaggering brutality, delivered with a style and panache so entirely unaffected by late-80s rock uniformity that they were clearly a band out of time. But to an audience painfully aware of just how insipid their times were, this was only considered an advantage.

Of course, Thee Hypnotics were not alone in reacquainting guitar rock with its temporarily mislaid grit and graunch as the 90s dawned. Seattle's soon-to-be-iconic Sub Pop label knew fellow travellers when they heard them.

"We went to see Sonic Youth play Kilburn, the opening band was Mudhoney, and we were like, 'Wow!'" says Jones. "During intermission, [Mudhoney frontman] Mark Arm came over to us and said: 'You're Thee Hypnotics, right? I've got your single and I really want you to sign it.'"

It wasn't all they signed. Thee Hypnotics became the first UK band contracted to Sub Pop.

Having replaced departing drummer Mark Thomson with Phil Smith, the band headed out to tour the US, where Jones remembers scenes at their Seattle show "got mental. A carving knife arrived on the drummer's snare. There were fireworks in the shape of people going off all over the place."

> **"A carving knife arrived on the drummer's snare. There were fireworks in the shape of people going off all over the place…"**
>
> Jim Jones

Thee Hypnotics returned to the UK older, wiser, groovier, gravitated to Beggars Banquet and unleashed their debut studio album, *Come Down Heavy*. Featuring guest appearances from the Pretty Things' Phil May and Dick Taylor, it was a tripped-out and titanic riff-driven monster.

It was "a good snapshot of where we were at the time", reckons Jones. "One foot in Blue Cheer and one foot in the punk side of Led Zeppelin – their first two albums, when Jimmy Page played the Esquire instead of the Les Paul."

Having been dissatisfied with the tapes' original Soho mixes, the band had the album remixed in Seattle by Mudhoney/Nirvana's *Bleach* producer Jack Endino. It reached No.2 in the UK independent chart.

With their dark star finally in the ascendent, disaster struck in Minneapolis when the band were touring America with the Smashing Pumpkins supporting. A drunk driver ran a red light, totalled the band's Dodge van and nearly killed Phil Smith. "He took a Buick in the hip at seventy miles an hour," says Hanson. "It crushed him, broke his pelvis in eight places. He was close to death's door."

With Smith in hospital for nine months, the band fulfilled outstanding tour commitments with The Damned's drummer Rat Scabies deputising, and set about writing for what would become *Soul, Glitter & Sin* (an album ultimately recorded with Stone Roses producer John Leckie). A cinematic record, it saw the band's palette of influences expanded significantly. "Big Star, Nick Cave, Tom Waits, Dr. John, Captain Beefheart, *Taxi Driver*, *Blue Velvet*, *Las Vegas Grind* strip club compilations, all channeled through a Fender Twin," says Hanson.

"Where *Come Down Heavy* was aspirational, *Soul, Glitter & Sin* was reflective," explains Jones. "It's the difference between young guys dreaming about stuff, and a band that had been through something. After the crash, when we had to ▷

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Hypnotic in '87/88: (l-r) Jim Jones, Mark Thompson, Ray Hanson, Chris Dennis

lay low for a while, drugs crept in, other aspects of life and relationships. We were experiencing a lot of things for the first time. And I think you can hear that."

"It's introspective, sometimes melancholic as well," says Hanson, "It's pensive and cerebral rather than visceral."

The band toured the album for two years, sometimes alongside the Black Crowes. By the time they reached the Viper Room, LA's glitterati were out in force. But by then drug-free Will Pepper had had enough.

Jones, having remained in LA at the end of the tour, brought in Craig Pike, who had previously been playing bass for Iggy Pop, as Pepper's replacement.

"He was in the band for ten months then died of a heroin overdose," is how Hanson succinctly précises Pike's brief tenure. "We went on this crazy European tour, and I was saying to him: 'Are you trying to break that stupid Nikki Sixx record for how many times you can overdose on a tour?' I mean, everyone was doing dope, but Craig would do the whole bag, and lock the door as well. So he'd be butt-naked on my bed, soaking wet, the bath would be running, and some Spanish junkie trying to get his heart going."

"He went blue a lot," Jones says, nodding. "I gave him mouth-to-mouth a few times."

Over the course of their career you could hear which particular chemicals were feeding Thee Hypnotics' heads at any given time. To the outside observer it might seem that while *Come Down Heavy* was an acid album, as things got darker *Soul, Glitter & Sin* exhibited a way more opiated element.

"You got it." confirms Hanson. "That's exactly the order it happened in. Particular backdrops were coloured by particular drugs: cerebral drugs, then opiate drugs. Then with the acid you'd smoke pot; heroin, the speedy side."

"The music's a pretty good reflection of what the lifestyle was like at the time," says Jones.

"In hindsight it's reflected quite clearly," Hanson concludes. "And it's great it's documented like that. The audio represents the authenticity of the band. We've lived it. It's not a dress-up game. We've been ensconced in living it… It's a serious business, this rock'n'roll."

"We've lived it. It's not a dress-up game… It's a serious business, this rock'n'roll."

Ray Hanson

At the time of Craig Pike's death, Thee Hypnotics were already demoing their third studio album, *The Very Crystal Speed Machine*, produced by Chris Robinson (Black Crowes) and set for release on American Recordings. Following fate's intervention they reunited with Will Pepper. "And in the face of adversity," says Hanson, "we were off on another trip."

"Another lifetime," Jones adds, "A different world… A bit more cocaine in the next chapter."

But for every up, a down. On the eve of the album's release, with flights booked for an imminent US tour, the label unexpectedly withdrew their funding. The album was released, but with no press or promotion budget. And no tour short-fall.

"It was classic Hypnotics bad luck." says Jones.

"Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory," Hanson says, smiling. "We ended up getting an old yellow school bus, with all the chairs taken out. We played every nook and cranny, from the deserts of Texas to the weeping willows of Atlanta, Georgia."

"No hotels, no air-con, in a heat wave," Jones recalls. "It was our *Grapes Of Wrath* tour."

"Phil used to say rock'n'roll's a gladiatorial sport," Hanson shrugs. "Well, we were holding on and going through the flames."

There then followed a return to London and a two-year hiatus.

Returning to the fray in 1997, the band rehearsed and demoed extensively (there are more than enough recordings in Hanson's archive for a double album of unreleased material), gigged intermittently and released the *Earth Blues 99* seven-inch on Rocket Recordings. But with Britpop holding sway, the all-too-authentic Thee Hypnotics were a band out of time – same as it ever was.

"I remember a lot of partying at the time," Hanson says. "We'd turn up at rehearsals without sleeping. There was a spiky cocaine vibe going on and Thee Hypnotics had a tarnished name. We were banging our heads against a brick wall."

After Thee Hypnotics finally called it a day in '99, Hanson didn't pick up his guitar for four years. "It was like a divorce, an arm missing, a lost, methadone ghost situation. Pretty miserable." Jones managed to cold turkey from music for two months before he "started going berserk." Hanson ultimately found creative outlet via a Portastudio in '04, while Jones embarked upon an ever-burgeoning solo career that has encompassed Black Moses, the Jim Jones Revue and Jim Jones And The Righteous Mind. The pair always remained firm friends. Firm friends with a strong sense of unfinished business.

Consequently, a perfect storm of social media re-engagement; fans worldwide button-holing Jones at his gigs to tell him how Thee Hypnotics changed their lives; Hanson's desire to secure a release for hitherto unheard material and various licensing enquiries led to a re-establishment of communications with Beggars Banquet, and finds Thee Hypnotics back among us. They're set to unleash the four-disc box set *Righteously Recharged*, gigs are imminent and there's even a documentary film in the works. Could we be bearing witness to the unlikeliest of all happy endings?

"All the artists we chose as role models had tragic career trajectories," Jones says. "Thunders, the Velvets. And that was part of the appeal to us. We're aspiring to tragedy."

"Careful what you wish for," cautions Hanson. "Because as you're going through it you're thinking: 'Wait a minute, this is actually happening.'"

So which were you: twenty years too late or twenty years too early?

"Both," Jones says without hesitation. "Wrong place, wrong time, wrong attitude… And it was our choice, it wasn't accidentally wrong. It was wrong by design."

"We really couldn't have planned it better," Hanson says, then considers his empty glass for a moment. "Fancy another?"

Why not? What could possibly go wrong?

Thee Hypnotics' tour begins this month. See Listings, p113, for dates.

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INSIDE OUT

Songbird

With one of the most captivating voices of her era, **Sandy Denny** seemed assured of major success. But insecurity, mistakes and finally tragedy meant she never fulfilled her potential.

Words: **Paul Rees**

REX

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Bassist Ashley Hutchings spent not much more than a year playing with Sandy Denny in Fairport Convention, but he has been asked to talk about her for four decades now. Hutchings believed he had said everything he possibly could on the subject, but on this late-winter's afternoon it occurs to him that there is one acute memory he hasn't yet shared of the extraordinary woman who fronted Fairport for just a fleeting period in 1968 and '69.

When Denny joined Fairport she was a 21-year-old folk singer, rich with promise but little-known. Hutchings, at 23, was the band's bassist and elder statesman. Fairport were taking baby steps on London's underground club circuit, sharing bills with the nascent Pink Floyd and in thrall to the acid-rock sound blown in from the American West Coast. Her arrival in the group was their catalyst for change, since she brought along with her an appreciation of traditional English song and could sing a hushed ballad like an angel, and roaring rock with all the bruised guts of Janis Joplin. By the by, she was loud, erratic, funny, needy prone to veering mood swings; a pocket dynamo in every respect. The five nice, polite, middle-class English lads she joined in the band hadn't encountered anyone quite like her. But then nor had anyone else.

In the rush of one helter-skelter year, Fairport made three albums with Denny that birthed British folk rock, the effects spreading out like ripples across a pool. There was also tragedy. Returning to London from a gig in Birmingham in May 1969, the band's van crashed on the M1. Drummer Martin Lamble, just 19, and guitarist Richard Thompson's girlfriend, Jeannie Franklyn, were killed instantly. Denny had travelled home separately that night, but like the others, she was weighed down by a terrible sense of loss and survivor's guilt.

After she left Fairport in December '69, impulsively, messily, Denny's course was wayward. Troubled by self-doubt and insecurities, she was never able for long to give full vent to her blazing talent. She flickered instead, like a candle burning in a draughty room, becoming best known for the bewitching spell she cast singing with Robert Plant on Led Zeppelin's *The Battle of Evermore*, although it was a mere cameo.

It's some time in Britain in 1977, the year of drought, Silver Jubilee street parties and punk rock, and the scene is a café-bar in West London. The place is all bustle and chatter when Hutchings walks in off the street, but one voice stands out. He hasn't even thought of running into Denny, has scarcely seen her in eight years. Yet there she is, at a table with a handful of people Hutchings doesn't recognise, larger than life and, as she so often made herself, the centre of attention.

"She had been drinking, of course," Hutchings recalls of their encounter. "And when she saw me she said: 'Oh, Ashley, come and kiss my hand.' She held out a hand for me. Well, she was just drunk, that's fair enough. But I didn't make a joke of it, like I should. I walked away instead, rejected her. That was the last time that I saw her, and it's haunted me a bit ever since."

Born Alexandra Elene MacLean Denny on January 6, 1947, into a comfortably-off household in Wimbledon, South London, Sandy's roots on her father's side were Scottish. Her father, a civil servant, encouraged his precocious daughter to recite from *Songs Of The Hebrides*, which he kept around the house. Her paternal grandmother would sing to her the ballads she herself had been taught growing up on the Isle of Mull. As a child, Sandy took piano and violin lessons. When as a teenager she picked up her elder brother David's guitar, she was diligent enough at the instrument to convince her father to buy her one of her own.

Neil Denny was by all accounts otherwise a rather aloof and distant man, his wife Edna sharp-tongued and chiding. Prim and slim, Sandy's mother would rebuke her for being dumpy, sowing seeds that festered for all of her short life. At Coombe Girls' Grammar, Sandy was a restless, uninspired student. She played lead violin in the school orchestra and gained five 'O' Levels, music included. But she found her true calling on the local folk club circuit, which at the time was enjoying something of a boom.

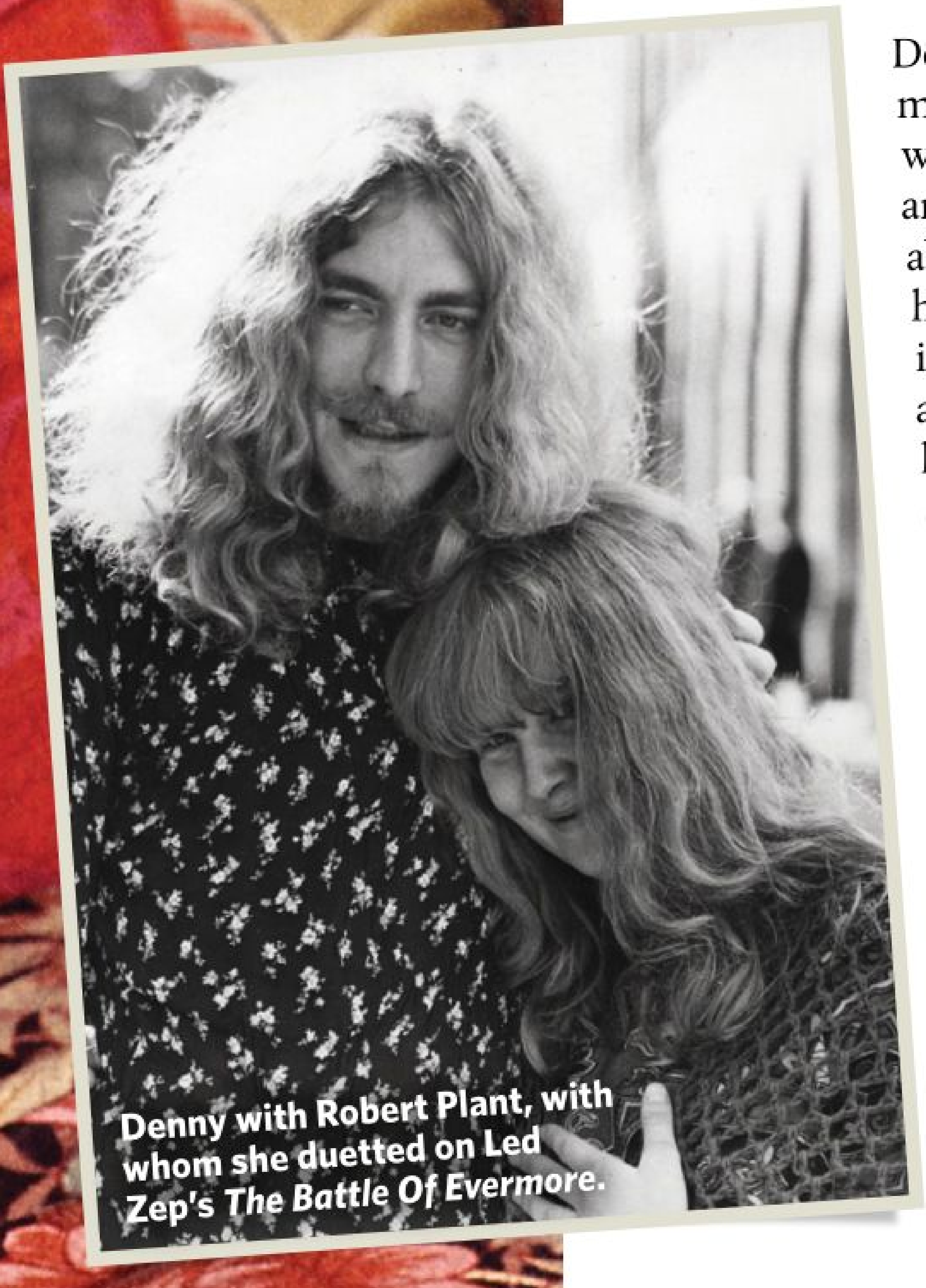
"She was one of the best singers I'd ever heard in my life."

Fairport bandmate Richard Thompson

As the young Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were becoming required listening among British hipsters, folk clubs and folk nights sprung up all along the Thames and around Soho in London. At 15, Denny discovered Kingston Barge, a bellwether club founded in 1961 on a converted coal barge. It was here that another local lad, John Martyn, would debut, and also where visiting American songwriter Paul Simon did a regular turn. Denny plucked up the courage to sing floor spots at the Barge and other nearby clubs, most often something by Dylan or Baez.

In the interim between leaving school and taking up a place at Kingston Art School, Denny took a temporary job as a nurse at the Royal Brompton Hospital in Kensington. The work was menial and a drudge, but the hospital was next door to London's self-styled 'oldest folk club', the Troubadour on Old Brompton Road. On Tuesday nights at the end of her shift, she would walk along to the Troubadour and into a whole other world.

Linda Peters (later Linda Thompson), a fellow Troubadour habituate, recalled to Denny's biographer Mick Houghton how "she used to come down straight from the hospital with all sorts of drugs stashed in her pockets that she had stolen from patients –


Denny with Robert Plant, with whom she duetted on Led Zep's *The Battle Of Evermore*.

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Fairport Convention in 1969: (l-r) Richard Thompson, Sandy Denny, Simon Nicol, Martin Lamble, Ashley Hutchings.

uppers, downers, sleeping pills. Then she'd get up on stage and be amazing from the get-go."

When Denny let loose her voice, the effect was transformative. It was as if others beheld her in a dazzling new light, a body apart from the awkward, unprepossessing girl in a nurse's uniform. For her own part, singing was something that filled her up, gave her a feeling of being set free.

Beginning art school, she was introduced to a new club, Les Cousins, that opened up in a basement coffee shop on Soho's Greek Street. It was soon hosting the cream of the new folk talent bubbling up in London, among them Roy Harper, Ralph McTell and Al Stewart.

On October 27, 1965, Denny shared a bill there with Paul Simon and another transplanted American, a brooding, self-destructive character named Jackson C Frank. Shortly after, she fell into a relationship with Frank that set what would become a familiar pattern for her. Which is to say it was tempestuous and brief.

Through the fullness of the next year, folk also got launched to the forefront of pop culture. In America, Dylan plugged in, The Byrds jangled and prodigal son Simon hit pay dirt with *The Sound of Silence*, while the 19-year-old Donovan broke out in Britain. In this hothouse atmosphere, Denny started to pick up club engagements across the country. She broke up from her first year at art school in the summer of 1966 and never went back.

By early 1967, Denny was pulling in good money as a full-time musician. Fronting for a couple of folk stalwarts, Johnny Silvio and Alex Campbell, she also made her first two records: *Sandy & Johnny* and *Alex Campbell & His Friends*. Neither made any real impression. However, Denny's bolstered confidence helped her to make her next move, which was to hook up with the already established band The Strawbs.

Formed in 1964 as a bluegrass group, The Strawbs had shifted towards a more English sound by the time their principal member, Dave Cousins, spotted Denny singing at the Troubadour. During her year-long tenure with them, the band played just a handful of shows, but among these was a week-long club residency in Copenhagen in the summer of 1967. While in the Danish capital, The Strawbs recorded their first album, *All Our Own Work*, although it would go unreleased for six years. As the title implied, it was made up of 12 original songs, most slight and written by Cousins, but with one exception. Put down with just guitar and Denny's voice, *Who Knows Where the Time Goes?* was a graceful, lilting ballad. The first song of her own that she felt emboldened enough to share, hindsight has made it sound almost unbearably poignant.

> **"Sandy was a very loud, rather raucous person with a broad and bawdy wit, not known to be a cautious drinker."**
>
> **Producer Joe Boyd**

Within a year, the American folk singer Judy Collins had picked up on Denny's song and made it the title track of her new album. By then, Denny was out of The Strawbs and on the verge of joining Fairport. She had run into their manager/producer, a laconic 25-year-old called Joe Boyd, on the London club scene. Boyd had advised her against signing a recording contract with The Strawbs, stymying their album and doubtless with his charges in mind. Fairport had not long completed their debut LP, with singer Judy Dyble, whose voice was pretty but insubstantial and whom Boyd wanted out of the band. They had added a second singer, Ian Matthews, to support Dyble, but by the spring of 1968 they decided to cut her loose.

On May 13, Boyd arranged for Fairport to audition for a replacement in the back room of a pub in Fulham. Six girls turned up on the day, Denny among them. Neither Ashley Hutchings nor Richard Thompson can recall Boyd marking their card about her, but she struck them instantaneously enough that they offered her the job on the spot.

"Sandy was head and shoulders above the rest," says Hutchings. "She breezed in and kind of took over. She didn't just want to sing for us, she also wanted us to play for her and to see if we were good enough."

"She was one of the best singers I'd ever heard in my life," Thompson continues. "As a personality she seemed bubbly, insecure, short-tempered and a lot of fun, and all of those things together. The immediate impact she had, I think, was that at last we felt that we were a real band."

That summer, the new-look Fairport Convention did a number of festival dates around the UK, including the Isle of Wight and a free affair on London's Hampstead Heath with Jefferson Airplane. Fairport had been strongly influenced by the American band, and now they too had a captivating, formidable woman fronting them.

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> **"A lot of men loved and chased her, but they weren't the ones she wanted. She wanted these unobtainable men."**
>
> **Richard Thompson**

Denny with Fairport in 1974, having rejoined the band that year.

Just like the Airplane's Grace Slick, Denny could hail the sirens but also bring a room to a reverential hush.

In July, Fairport began the sessions for a new album with Boyd. At a stroke on *What We Did On Our Holidays*, the band sounded more assured and forceful. Individually, Thompson, Hutchings, Lamble and second guitarist Simon Nicol were all excellent musicians, but with Denny they now had a vessel through which to channel a collective power. For Boyd at least, the pace and ease at which the band moved with their new singer was both a blessing and a relief.

"Temperamentally she was very, very different from them," Boyd told Denny's other biographer, Clinton Heylin. "Sandy was a very loud, rather raucous person with a broad and bawdy wit, sometimes a foul tongue, not known to be a cautious drinker. I was afraid that she was going to chew them up and spit them out for breakfast."

"Sandy was also in a different culture to the rest of us," adds Hutchings. "She liked a drink, or ten, and took drugs – soft ones mostly, I think – and we didn't. We weren't 'in' with her drinking buddies, but we loved her dearly.

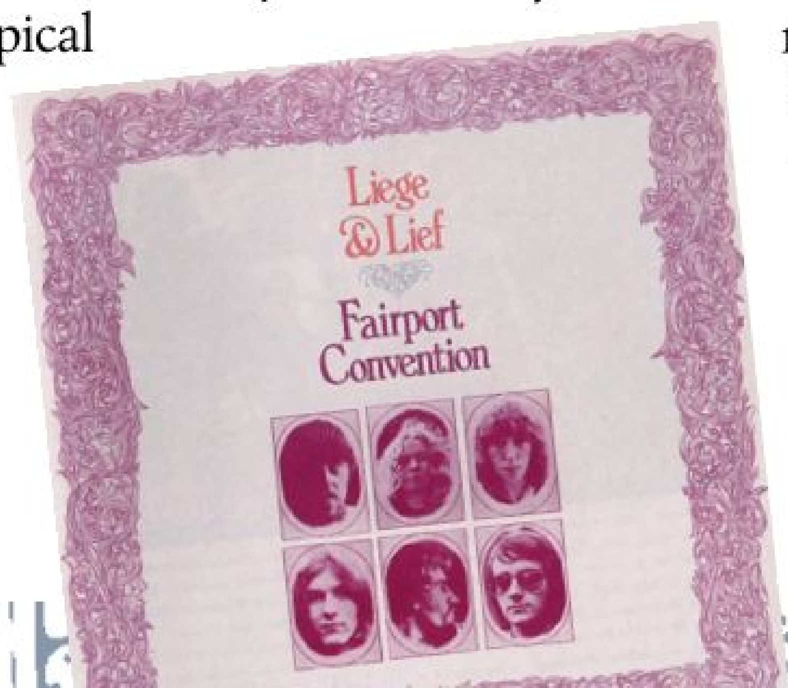
"On stage, she was sensationally good. She would open her mouth to sing, say, a slow, gentle song, and you could hear a pin drop. Travelling in the van, she would always sit next to me and fall off to sleep with her head on my shoulder. That's an image of her that I treasure."

These were heady times, and there was no pause to catch breath. No sooner was their second album done and dusted than Fairport were into the making of their third, *Unhalfbricking*. Now, Denny truly asserted herself. She gave the band *Who Knows Where The Time Goes?*, nailing this version in one take, and brought in a second song, *Autopsy*, that was just as seductive. It was her suggestion to reimagine Dylan's *If You Gotta Go, Go Now* in French, as *Si Tu Dois Partir*. Fairport's version became a freak hit, landing them on *Top Of The Pops*, Denny in a floral dress, the others in berets and hooped jumpers, altogether an experience she claimed to have despised. A second Dylan cover, *Percy's Song*, was the only track on the album to feature Matthews. Deemed surplus to requirements, he was let go.

Even the album title and artwork bore Denny's imprint. 'Unhalfbricking' was a typical nonsense word that she came up with during a word game. When it came to shoot a photograph for the album cover, and also characteristically on the spur of the moment, she posited the idea of the band in the garden of her childhood home. Perhaps her greatest contribution to the record, though, was to bring in *A Sailor's Life*, a traditional song she had picked up on the folk circuit. Fairport's version unwound over a bravura 11-plus minutes, Thompson's guitar spirals and the flashing fiddle of session player Dave Swarbrick spiriting the listener off to more exotic, Eastern climes, Denny's vocal torch song exquisite. Here was the telegraph announcing where Fairport Convention would next roam.

On May 11, 1969, two months ahead of the album's release, while driving back to London from Birmingham club Mothers the band's van hit a crash barrier and rolled down the embankment, scattering the occupants. Lamble and Franklyn died on impact; Hutchings was left temporarily blinded and with a shattered pelvis. Denny had gone on ahead with her new boyfriend, guitarist Trevor Lucas, whose band Eclection had opened for Fairport that night.

"She was completely shell-shocked," Linda Thompson related to Mick Houghton. "I never really heard Sandy say anything about the crash, nor Richard, nor anyone from the band. We bottled things up back then; stiff upper lip and all that."



Despite the tragedy, Fairport didn't throw in the towel, as if doing so would make the events of that fateful night too awful to bear. Once Hutchings was out of hospital, they retreated to rural Hampshire and the restorative confines of a 19th-century rectory, Farley House. Joining them there were Swarbrick, now a full-time member, and Lamble's replacement, Dave Mattacks, whose background was in big-band jazz.

Summer passed into autumn, *Unhalfbricking* came and went, and out the other side Fairport emerged with a new record that delved back deep into the English song tradition, but to zoom it off to a reimagined, electrified present. Unloved at the time, simply too much of a shift, *Liege & Lief*'s stature has grown over the years. On a record that sounded at once ages old and newborn, Denny took on staples such as *Reynardine* and *Matty Groves* and wrung them for pathos and drama. In total, the results were thrilling, magic captured in a bottle.

"It was a concentrated period for everyone," recalls Hutchings. "The instruments were permanently set up in the big living room and we literally worked every day. Privately, we grieved, but no one had any counselling, and so it came out in dribs and drabs. Also, there was a need for us to relax and be happy. No one before had ever played these songs with a rhythm section, so it was hard work too, but Sandy probably adjusted quicker than anyone else. All through the making of that record, she was like a breeze."

But *Liege & Lief* proved to be a last hurrah. Hutchings wanted Fairport to carry on digging for lost treasure, but Denny had a stockpile of her ▷

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own songs. She didn't want to have to tour apart from Lucas, not least because he had a reputation as an incorrigible ladies' man and she didn't trust him not to stray. That November, after an emotional return gig at Mothers, she served her bandmates notice that she was quitting Fairport.

"It had crossed our minds that Sandy and Trevor would want to be in a band together," says Richard Thompson. "But it was such an uncomfortable thought for us that we kind of shoved it to the back of our minds, so it was still a shock when Sandy left. You also have to remember, hanging over this whole time was the fact we were all still traumatised by the accident. In some ways, all of our actions and perspectives were warped by that."

Unmoored from Fairport, Denny never really got her bearings back. To a greater extent she drifted, allowing herself to be pushed along by one current after another, until she began to flail, then drown. Boyd begged her to make a solo album off the bat, securing for her a £40,000 advance from A&M Records in the US. She flatly refused, and instead used A&M's money to fund the group, Fotheringay, that she hastily assembled with Lucas. Soon enough the five-piece were burning through her money, most wastefully on having an enormous PA built that they ended up hardly using.

Joe Boyd produced their self-titled debut album of 1970, which gloried in a handful of the most outstanding vocals Denny was ever to commit to tape, but the band played just a smattering of shows to promote it. One of these was an ill-starred headliner at the Royal Albert Hall that October, at which Denny appeared paralysed by nerves and the band as a whole got blown off stage by their attention-grabbing opening act, a young Elton John.

Fotheringay's second album, begun the following year, was never completed. In Denny's account, Boyd was relentlessly pressuring her to go solo. When he got offered an executive posting at Warner Brothers Records in Los Angeles, she claimed he promised he would turn it down if she would kill off Fotheringay and make her own record with him. She obliged with the band, but Boyd, who has long disputed her version of events, upped and left regardless. Either way, the upshot was that she lost a champion, and just when she needed one most.

She called on another, former Fairport bandmate Richard Thompson, to guide her through her solo debut, *The North Star Grassman And The Ravens*, which she recorded in spring 1971. It seems now a reflection of her mood at the time, the songs and her vocals sombre and subdued. It was not an easy record to extract from her, or one to elevate her out of the folk niche.

"Sometimes she would coast through a session," says Thompson. "She would know something was missing and be dissatisfied, but it was almost like she had to have an absolute deadline to force her to produce the goods. It was also a tough record in the sense that Sandy wrote songs that were very one-paced. That created a certain atmosphere, but got to be repetitive.

Denny fronting Fotheringay in 1970, the band she put together after leaving Fairport.

"But on the tour we did for that record, she was the most stable that I ever saw her. When I think of Sandy now, it's always of her laughing and giggling. She could be great fun, and sometimes performing on stage with her could be a transcendent experience."

"There were ghastly stories about Sandy and Trevor Lucas, how they used to get drunk and abuse each other."
Photographer Gered Mankowitz

This state of equilibrium was not to last. Lucas took over as producer for her next record, *Sandy*, an often sublime, stately collection. Island Records had high hopes for it, even going so far as to have famed photographer David Bailey shoot her portrait for the cover, but it was a flop. After that, under Lucas's steerage, Denny tried for a kind of sepia-tinted whimsy on *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz*, an album shaded in strings and brass punctuations. That one flopped too, although it did feature one of her loveliest songs, *Friends*, which was inspired by an unconsummated liaison with Pete Townshend.

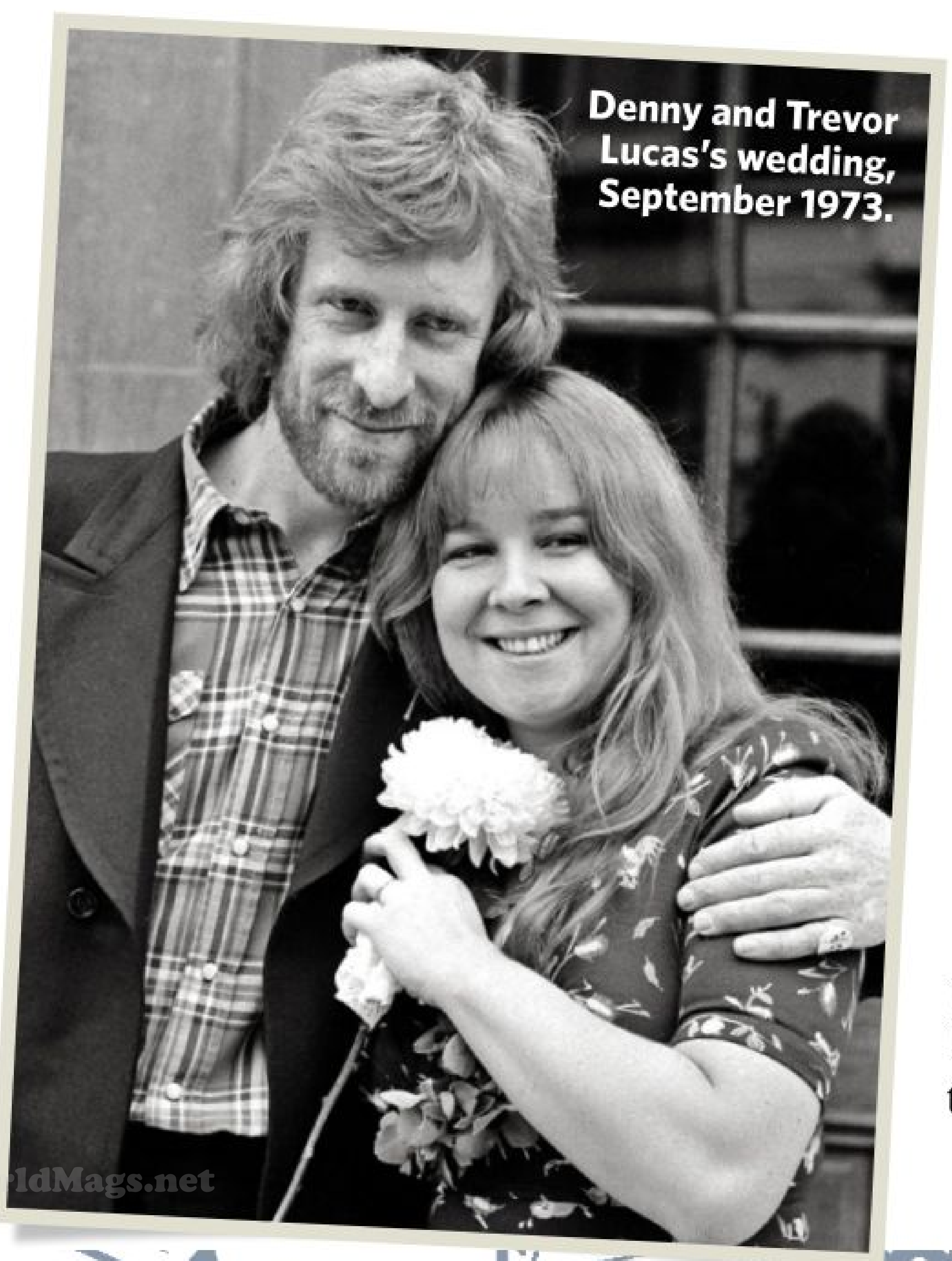
"Sandy was insecure about her looks, her appearance sometimes," notes Thompson. "I thought she was pretty, and a lot of men loved and chased her, but they weren't the ones she wanted. She wanted these unobtainable men. She got to be insecure about her career, too, and probably thought she had to bend. And when you start trying to fit a different mould, the risk is that you lose whatever individuality you had."

Added to this, her relationship with Lucas, always on a knife edge, had become even more fractious and damaging, exacerbated by the fact that he had been signed up by Fairport as a guitarist and was all too often out of her sight. The two great plunges she took before *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz* had even come to appear now like last-ditch attempts to fend off further psychic bruising. In the first instance, in September 1973, she and Lucas got married. Her appalled father refused to attend. Secondly, she rejoined Fairport.

"Sandy was really lovely, but there were quite a lot of rumours going around that she was having a tough time," says Gered Mankowitz, who photographed her for the *Waltz* album cover. "Trevor Lucas wasn't at the shoot, but it was clear to all of us that knew her that there was a tremendous amount of friction between the two of them. There were ghastly stories about them, how they both used to get drunk and abuse each other."

After the wedding, the couple moved from London to an old country cottage, The Twistle, in the Northamptonshire village of Byfield. Rather than being a sanctuary, for Denny it would become more of a prison.

Back in Fairport, she did at least get to work with a producer who fired her up again. Island's last throw of the dice to break the band internationally, for the *Rising For The Moon* album, the label stumped up for Glyn Johns, renowned for marshalling the Rolling Stones, the Eagles, Zeppelin and The Who. A strict, unyielding taskmaster, Johns brooked no nonsense and got the very best out of Denny. Pushed hard, she poured her soul into the record, but it rose no higher than No.143 on the US chart. ▷



Denny and Trevor Lucas's wedding, September 1973.

TOP: GETTY; BOTTOM: ALAMY

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Denny in '74, around the time of the release of her solo album *Like An Old Fashioned Waltz*.

"Sandy wasn't in a good place and was starting to slide, but she really delivered on that record," says drummer Dave Mattacks, who nevertheless left Fairport midway through the recording and missed the arduous tour that followed. "I had just had enough of banging my head against the wall. Basically, nobody was really interested in folk rock, for want of a better term. That also contributed to Sandy's difficulties. Had there been some real success, I don't believe things would have gone the way they did."

"Those long tours were gruelling and everybody could see that she wasn't happy in herself," adds Dave Pegg, who took over from Hutchings on bass. "There were nights when she would play bum notes on the piano."

"She just had that very special quality when she sang a beautiful song. It broke your heart."
Ashley Hutchings

Fairport came home from the tour in a parlous financial state, and Denny left the band for a second time. She retreated to The Twistle. Her drinking escalated, and her black moods got deeper. She began to make another solo record with Lucas, intent upon aiming at a more contemporary sound, but her voice was showing the strain, and often as not she would turn up to the studio late, if at all. Yet still she was capable of moments of wonder, such as on the haunted song *No More Sad Refrains* that would end up closing the album.

She delivered the record, which she had called *Gold Dust*, to Island in the summer of 1976, but the label shelved it, with no one quite sure what to do with it, or her, any more. It would be 10 months before it finally got a release, Island having coerced Denny into adding to it a perfunctory cover of Elton John's *Candle In The Wind*, on which she sounded somnambulant, and retitling it *Rendezvous*. Arriving as punk blew up, it vanished into an abyss and Island let go of her like yesterday's news.

At the beginning of 1977, Denny found out she was pregnant. She had often spoken to friends of wanting to have a child, but impending motherhood didn't rein her in. Georgia Rose MacLean was born on July 12 ,1977, three months premature. She was kept in an incubator in hospital for two months, effectively to be detoxed. Denny was no more able to look after her baby when she at last took her home.

"When Georgia came along we all thought it was going to be great for her and would make her happy, but it didn't," says Dave Pegg. "She and Trevor were having serious problems, and that caused an awful lot of grief."

"At that point, I would see her sporadically and I was distressed when I did," adds Richard Thompson. "She was drinking more, doing more drugs, and I would have a really bad feeling that some potential tragic outcome was on the cards. Sandy was a mess. Her baby needed protecting. But even in a situation like that, people have to come to their own realisation."

Denny managed one final tour of the UK that November. Attendances were erratic, and so were her performances. The following March she took Georgia to visit her parents at their holiday cottage in Cornwall. One afternoon, coming downstairs, she stumbled and fell, hitting her head on a stone floor. Afterwards she told friends that her mother had refused to take her to hospital, not wanting to be seen with a drunken daughter.

Back in Byfield, she began to have debilitating headaches. She was prescribed a painkiller, Distalgesic, that when mixed with alcohol can have potentially fatal side effects.

Whatever occurred during those next dark, desperate days, it was enough to convince Lucas to take Georgia away from her. On the morning of April 14 he boarded a plane to Melbourne with their baby, on a one-way ticket. That evening, a Thursday, a distraught Denny called a friend, Miranda Ward, who came to pick her up and drive her back to London.

The two spent the weekend at Ward's flat. On the Monday morning, Ward went to work. She had arranged a doctor's appointment for Denny for later that same afternoon and left a note, promising to return in time. Ward had also asked a friend, Jon Cole, to look in on her. When Cole arrived at the flat, he found Denny unconscious at the foot of the stairs. She was rushed to hospital in a coma. When her condition didn't improve, she was transferred to one that specialised in brain injuries.

Days after arriving at his parents' house in Melbourne, Lucas flew back to London. Arriving at the hospital, he was told his wife was brain dead and was asked for his permission to have her life support turned off. In the event, Denny died naturally on April 21, 1978. She was 31. The coroner's report recorded her death as a 'traumatic mid-brain haemorrhage. Accidental.'

In the 40 years since Sandy Denny's death, her recorded works have been reissued, remastered and re-evaluated. Today there is a more general awareness of her wonderful talent and the extent of her influence. In life she was unable to get out of the black pit she fell into; in death her light is undimmed.

"No one came anywhere near Sandy. She was the best," says Ashley Hutchings. "She just had that very special quality when she sang a beautiful song. It broke your heart."

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A confrontational supergroup fronted by Tool vocalist Maynard James Keenan, **A Perfect Circle** have a refreshing approach: they don't really care whether you take them or leave them.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Billy Howerdel vividly remembers the first time he saw Maynard James Keenan on stage. It was 1991, and Keenan's band, Tool, were playing hip Hollywood venue Club Lingerie. Howerdel knew of the band via mutual friends.

The demo tape Howerdel had heard sounded full-on, but he wasn't prepared for the intensity in the room that night. As the band stretched and pummeled the wet clay of their music, a mohawked Keenan fixed Howerdel with a death-ray stare; he didn't blink, didn't look away, just kept looking at him unnervingly. Howerdel worked as a guitar tech for LA funk-rock heroes Fishbone, and he was used to maverick musicians, but this was something else.

"He had this fifty-yard stare, and I was in the target zone," says Howerdel. "I thought the guy was ready to jump off stage and have a ruckus."

Disconcerted, Howerdel moved out of Keenan's eyeline. The guy on stage didn't notice. He just carried on staring ahead, unaware and unflinching. "That's when I realised it wasn't me," says Howerdel. "That's just how he was."

What Howerdel didn't have even an inkling of that night was that he would not only enter Keenan's close orbit, but also eventually form a band with him.

Across the three albums they released in the early 00s, that band, A Perfect Circle, would gently (and occasionally not so gently) expand rock's sometimes inflexible musical and lyrical lexicon. Their muscular but intelligent songs weren't uncommercial, but nor were they pandering to anyone else but themselves. Like Keenan up on that stage, their approach was simple and uncompromising: this is how it is, take it or leave it.

There has been a long gap since then. A Perfect Circle haven't been entirely absent – like some mid-sized comet, they've reappeared every few years, for short bursts of touring activity, most recently in 2017 – but there's been a definite lack of activity on the studio front. A large part of this is down to Keenan's other commitments, among them Tool, his other band Puscifer, and the vineyard he owns and runs in Arizona.

That situation has changed recently. Howerdel and Keenan have finally found time to make their first new record since 2004's covers-come-protest album *eMOTIVE*. Titled *Eat The Elephant*, it busts the boundaries of what they do wide open. Its sound ranges from the hypnotic, piano-led title track to the perversely poppy *So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish*. "It's less focused," Howerdel says. "By that I mean there are more colours."

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"He had this fifty-yard stare, and I was in the target zone."

Billy Howerdel on first encountering Maynard Keenan

working as a guitar tech for the likes of Fishbone, Tool, Nine Inch Nails and David Bowie. He studied the work ethic of the bands and musicians whose orbit he was in (he cites NIN's Trent Reznor as a particular inspiration), and watched as technology changed, opening up a range of possibilities. All the while, he was working on songs that would form the basis of A Perfect Circle.

"I was always writing music in isolation," he says. "When I was on tour, I brought a big suitcase with guitar and bass. I was the pain in the ass in the road crew, crowding out the bus bay."

He'd half-heartedly tried to get a band off the ground earlier in the decade, but it would be Keenan who eventually strong-armed him into it. When Howerdel needed a place to stay after coming off a David Bowie tour in 1996, Keenan offered him his spare room.

Howerdel played Keenan the music he was making, and the singer liked it. If he was going to do something with it, Keenan suggested, then he'd love to sing on it. It seemed like a perfect plan. And then Axl Rose got in the way.

Not long after he moved in with Keenan, Howerdel got a call asking if he wanted to work on a new Guns N' Roses album. Axl had recruited former NIN guitarist Robin Finck, who called to ask if he'd be up for "programming strange guitar sounds".

Howerdel's time in the Guns N' Roses inner circle lasted two and a half years. Often it would be just him and Axl sitting together in a room together for hours, working on one piece of music while the band recorded in another part of the studio. Today he speaks respectfully of Rose.

"He and I hit it off. He had this desire to make the greatest record ever, which is a tough thing for anyone to set out to do. But there were so many moving parts. There was a lot of money, there was a lot of time, there were a lot of people. It didn't convince me that was the way to go."

The irony is that it's taken Howerdel and Keenan 14 years to make the new APC album – exactly the same amount of time it took Rose to create *Chinese Democracy*. The band toured sporadically between 2004 and 2013, and the guitarist says that he had enough songs five years ago to at least start the ball rolling on a new album. Was the delay frustrating?

"No, because there was no way of hurrying it up," he says. "The music is being written constantly. If I have a bank account of enough songs, I feel the confidence of being able to answer the call if Maynard says: 'Hey, I've got a window of time. Do you want to get together?'" ▷

The lengthy gap between records has served as a large evolutionary jump. But why have they decided to come back now?

"It just felt like it was time," says Keenan, thankfully without the basilisk gaze that transfixed Howerdel all those years ago.

The two men are sitting in separate, equally characterless business suites one floor apart, in a discreetly expensive hotel that overlooks London's Piccadilly Circus.

"A lot of different factors came together," he continues. "I saw a window to get it done, and Billy seemed ready. And it seemed like a perfect follow up to *eMOTIVE*." The man who recently described Donald Trump as "a disgusting turd" gives an ironic half-smile. "We thought things were bad then."

Maynard James Keenan describes Billy Howerdel as "stubborn", a trait you suspect is no less applicable to Keenan himself. "He's definitely one of those guys who writes in his closet and is constantly tweaking things, and will never actually release it," says the singer. "Maybe what I bring to the table for him is a sense of urgency: 'We have exactly ten minutes to do this, so get over whatever it is you're apprehensive about, and shit or get off the pot, cos I gotta go.'"

You can see he means. Where Keenan is polite but businesslike, with a parade-ground directness (no surprise, given that he joined the US Army for a couple of years), Howerdel has the thoughtful caution of a man who didn't get into the music business to do interviews. "I didn't have the burning desire, 'Look at me, look at me,'" he says. "I enjoy the making of things, getting into the details."

A look at his CV backs this up. For much of the 1990s, Howerdel was a behind-the-scenes guy,

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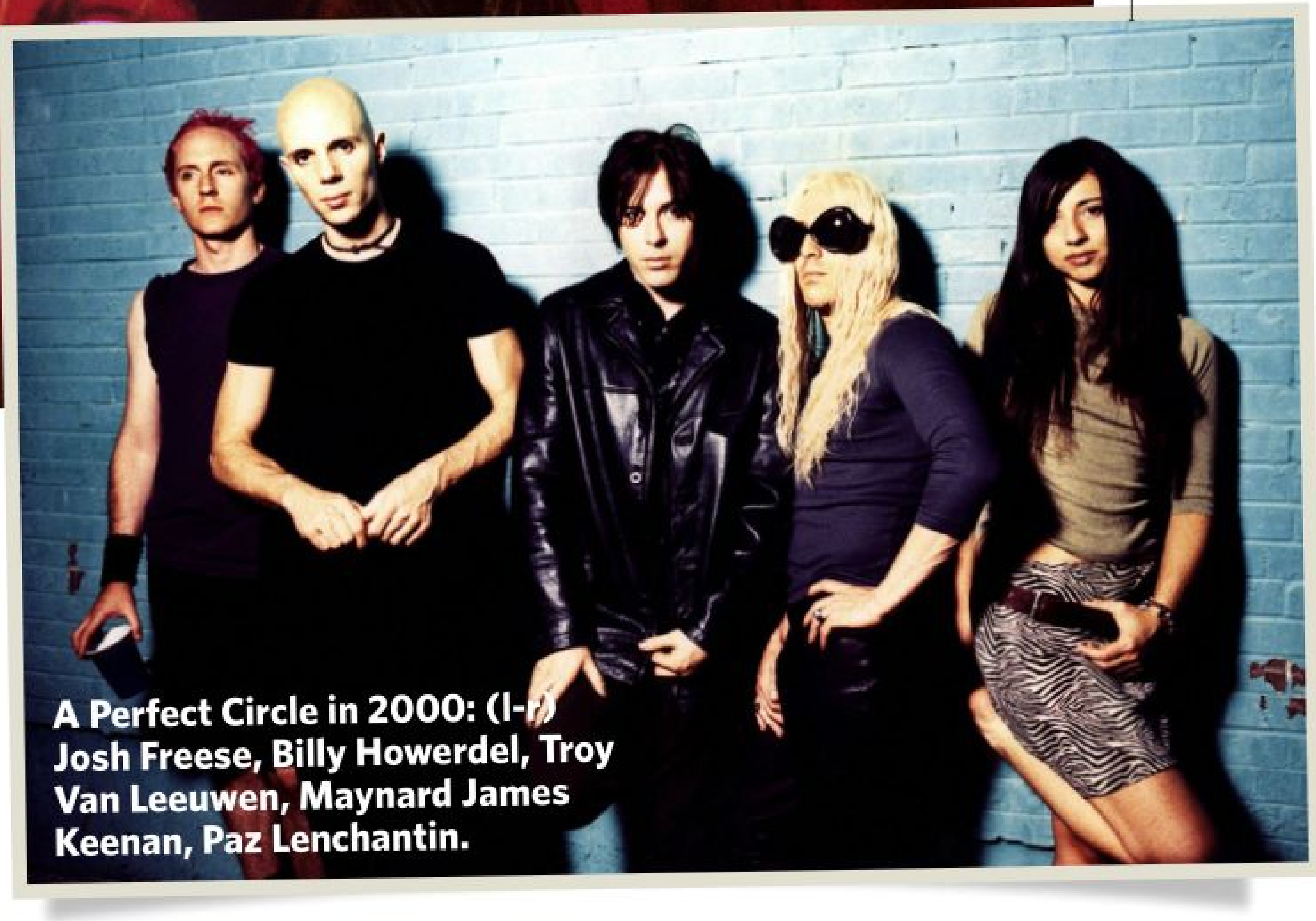
Blood-red brothers: Maynard James Keenan (left) and Billy Howerdel, Hollywood, 1999.

Keenan (second right) with Tool in 1993.



A Perfect Circle in 2000: (l-r) Josh Freese, Billy Howerdel, Troy Van Leeuwen, Maynard James Keenan, Paz Lenchantin.

Did you ever consider making an A Perfect Circle album without him?

"No," he says, looking perplexed that anyone would think he'd even consider it. "He and I are the foundation of the band. That's where we started. We set out to do it together."

Maynard James Keenan doesn't recall the Club Lingerie gig where he made such an impression on Billy Howerdel. His first solid recollection of his future bandmate dates back to when Tool supported Fishbone, the band Howerdel was tech-ing for on tour in France sometime in 1991. "Sweaty cheese, stale bread, playing to 12 people, going, 'What the fuck are we doing here?'" he says drily. "All of a sudden you wake up one day and you know everybody."

Both men have come a long way since then, though Keenan's journey has been more public. He's still best known as the singer with Tool, a band who have spent 25 years twisting rock into startling new shapes (any talk of that band's long-gestating new record is strictly off-limits today, enforced by the amusingly passive-aggressive presence of a management representative tapping away at a laptop in the room). Keenan also leads Puscifer, a deliberately uncategorisable collective that allows him to indulge in his stranger, more esoteric side.

And then there's the vineyard and wine cellar he set up in Arizona over a decade ago. Wine making is Keenan's great passion. Where he can be cagey about music, he's open and enthusiastic about wine, from his first introduction to that world ("There was a very specific bottle of wine, with a specific meal, in a specific town, that changed the way I thought") to the philosophy behind it all ("The idea of expressing a place, and having that story evolve in a bottle over time"). He currently employs 40 people. He's as serious about it as he is about any of his bands.

Despite his numerous other ventures, A Perfect Circle is no afterthought for Keenan. The delay between albums is down to his rigorous approach to his craft. He refused to commit if he couldn't give it his full attention.

It's impossible to properly gauge the working relationship between Keenan and Howerdel just by sitting with them, separately, for a couple of hours in a hotel room, but you could take an educated guess and say that neither would put up with the other if they were a dick. What does Maynard get out of working with Billy? He smirks.

"A headache. I'm kidding. He gets a bigger headache than I do, for sure. Working with Billy definitely helps me understand how I work well, how I don't work well."

Did he tell you what kind of album he wanted to make? "If he did, I didn't hear it."

Did you tell him what kind of album you wanted to make? "I made the kind of album I wanted to make. He's very focused on music, how that's all going to come together. When it comes approaching concept, I tend to be the bull in china shop."

There's a very clear sense that Keenan doesn't like to take things apart and lay them on the ground so other people can see how they work. That applies equally to inter-personal relationships, to the creative process and to his lyrics. Especially his lyrics. The album's title, *Eat The Elephant*, is a vivid phrase that broadly means tackling a big task one small step at a time. It could apply to the process of making the album itself, but it could just as easily mean something altogether more oblique. The faint whiff of social or political commentary hangs over new songs such as *The Contrarian* and *Delicious*, but nothing's ever explicitly spelled out, on record or in person. 'Work it out yourself,' is the unspoken message. 'Or don't. Whatever.'

There is one track on *Eat The Elephant* that does crack open the door into Keenan's mind very slightly: the sonically breezy and lyrically scabrous *So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish* borrows both its title and its comic imagery of dolphins vacating Earth from the Douglas Adams novel of the same name, the fourth book in the *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* 'trilogy'. Keenan is a fan of Adams. Both share a fairly dim view of humanity.

"I love the images in his books of people laying on the ground with bags on their heads because they might survive the destruction of the planet," he says, laughing. "I wrote this song and I couldn't figure out how to title it, because

"Get your camera out at a play or movie and see what happens."

Howerdel on APC banning filming at their gigs

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it was so sarcastic, so upbeat and destructive. And then I went: 'Fuck, it's *Hitchhiker's*.' The dolphins leaving the planet: 'Bye! Good luck!'"

Keenan has made no secret of his love of comedy. He was friends with visionary stand-up provocateur Bill Hicks, and he references stoner comics Cheech & Chong and, bizarrely, *The League Of Gentlemen* alongside Adams today. And anyone who appears on stage wearing a riot cop's uniform or a Madonna-style bustier and ponytail, as he has, really isn't taking things too seriously. The only snag is that not every gets his sense of humour.

"A lot of people get really literal, especially when you read jokes in print. That's the beauty of podcasts – you get a sense of timing and cadence. With print – emails, tweets – sometimes you miss the joke, because you can't capture sarcasm."

Keenan says he has conflicting feelings about the internet. He likes what it offers – "an entire collective unconsciousness at your fingertips" – but doesn't like what it's turned people into. This is the only time today he sounds exasperated.

"The biggest challenge is the sense of entitlement," he says. "It's built a generation of people that have expectations that aren't sustainable. Having everything handed to you. Free music, free movies. There's a generation who don't understand what it took to make the thing. There will be some kind of wake-up call when things are no longer free. There'll be a lot of crying."

There's an argument to be made that A Perfect Circle are the most confrontational band currently operating, although they'd probably recoil at the tag. While others take up cudgels and megaphones on the steps of Wall Street, they've let their mere existence do the talking. Their message is simple: you're either with us or we're not interested.

The stand they've taken against people filming their gigs is a case in point. They declared that anyone caught recording at shows on their 2017 tour would be ejected. It was a bold move, and one that anyone who has been forced to watch a gig through other people's phones wishes would have been made sooner by someone else. Still, it caused a predictable storm amid those it was aimed at.

"Why is it any different to going to a movie or a play?" says Howerdel. "Get your camera out there and see what happens. And what are you going to do with it anyway? Watch it ten times over?"

"We got yelled at quite hard," Keenan says in the tone of a man who couldn't care less. "People have this black mirror that they're waving around as if that's part of the experience, and I disagree. We're presenting something for you, there's a guided tour here, pay attention. You're coming into this thing hopefully with a sense of reverence for the work that went into it. So if we have to force that courtesy, I will. I'm not trying to be a Nazi prick, I'm trying to show you something. You paid for me to show you something, I didn't pay for you to show me something."

He wears the blank expression of a man who couldn't care less about what anyone else thinks. Even if you disagree, there's not much you can do about it. That's how it is with A Perfect Circle. Take it or leave it.

Eat The Elephant is out on April 20 via BMG

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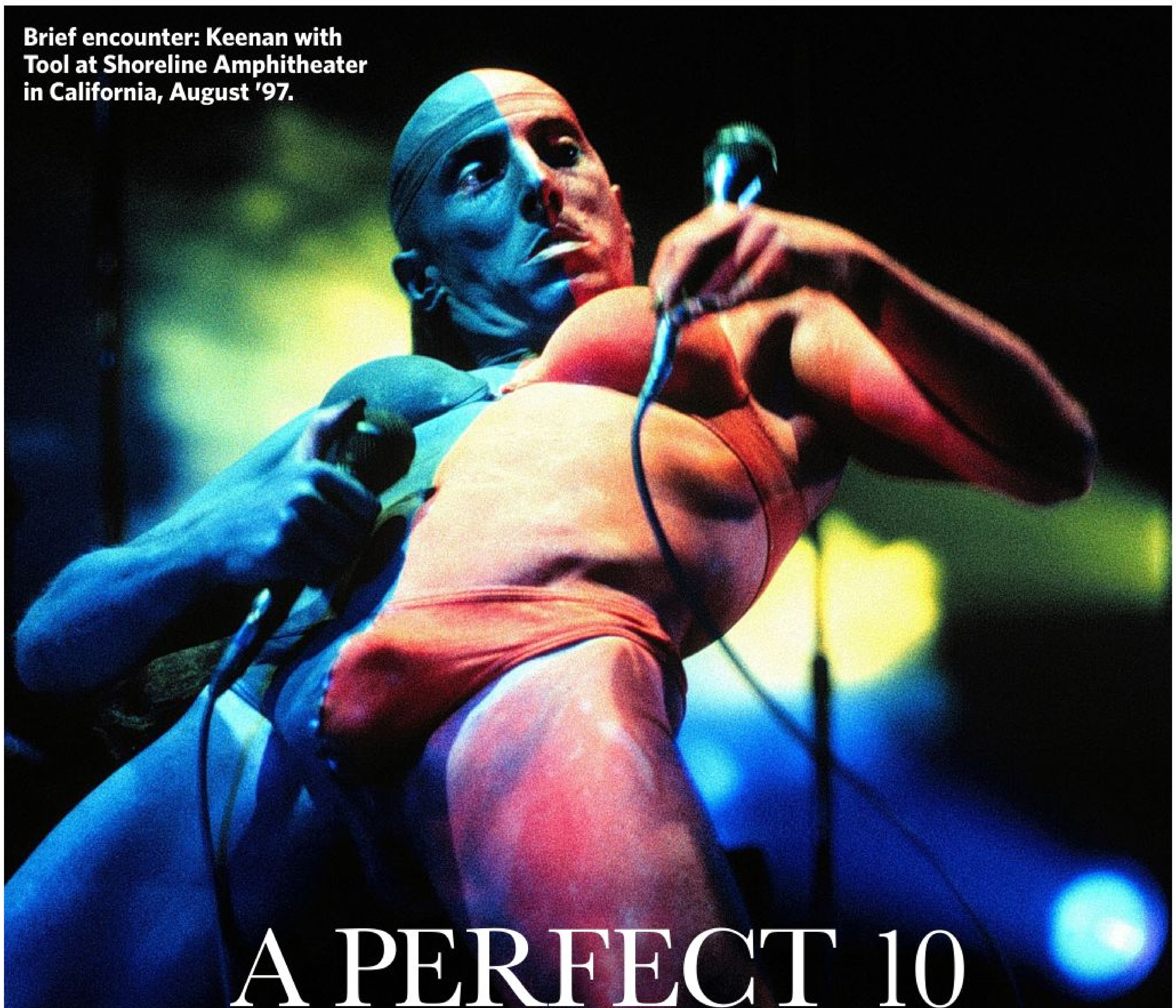


Brief encounter: Keenan with Tool at Shoreline Amphitheater in California, August '97.

A PERFECT 10

Key songs from the bands this supergroup's members have played with.

The Hollow
A Perfect Circle

With its taut but restless rhythm and Keenan's initimitable voice, the opening track on APC's debut album could have been a stripped-down Tool. But Billy Howerdel's shifting guitar cuts through the density, offering up moments of lightness that the mothership lacked.
From *Mer de Noms* (2000)

Judith
A Perfect Circle

Keenan has addressed religion before, though not with quite so much bitter sarcasm as he does here. Inspired by his mother's unshakeable faith even after her life had been ruined by a stroke, he couldn't have made his anger clearer: '*Fuck your God, your Lord and your Christ.*'
From *Mer de Noms* (2000)

Weak And Powerless
A Perfect Circle

APC's second album broadened their sonic palette, and never more so than on this intricate number, its rhythmic density alleviated by a complex, prog-like acoustic sheen.
From *The Thirteenth Step* (2003)

Imagine
A Perfect Circle

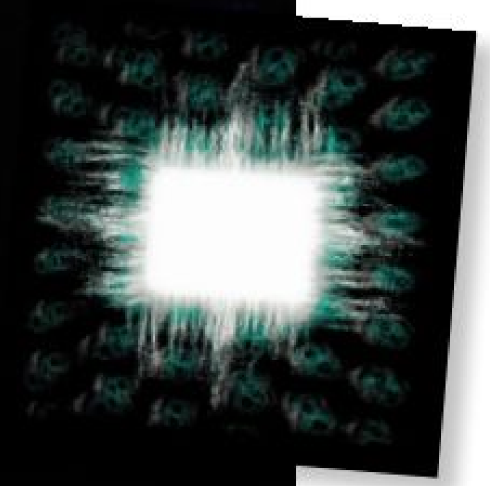
eMOTIVE was a Bush-era protest album disguised as a covers record. Most startling was Imagine, which reimagined John Lennon's hippie optimism as apocalyptic gothic drama with a large side order of irony.
From *eMOTIVE* (2004)

When The Levee Breaks
A Perfect Circle

Another iconoclastic cover. Here they totally upended the old Memphis Minnie blues number made famous by Led Zeppelin, turning it into a barely recognisable dreamlike ballad.
From *Three Sixty* (2013)

Lateralus
Tool

If *Stinkfest* is Tool at their pithiest, than *Lateralus* took it to the other extreme – a sometimes head-spinning nine-minute prog-metal epic featuring mutiple complex time signatures and a lyrical pattern based on the mathematical Fibonacci sequence. The yang to A Perfect Circle's yin.
From *Lateralus* (2001)



Stinkfest
Tool

Tool started out as a straightforward(ish) alt. metal band, but by the time of their second album they were warping their sound in strange new ways. This opening track was both direct and weird, and features one of the greatest build-and-release parts ever committed to record.
From *Aenima* (1996)

Stripped Away
Ashes Divide

Howerdel wasn't idle during APC's 14-year hiatus. Ashes Divide was a solo project in all but name, and their sole album, 2008's *Keep Telling Myself It's Alright*, featured songs that could conceivably have been written for the guitarist's other band. Howerdel has neither the voice nor the presence of Keenan, but that's not really the point; this is his band and his alone.
From *Keep Telling Myself It's Alright* (2008)

Conditions Of My Parole
Puscifer

Keenan's Puscifer started as a fictional band in an episode of 90s comedy programme *Mr Show* before taking on a life of its own. The singer describes it as "a playground for the various voices in my head". The title track of their second album is uncharacteristically straightforward, and hence one of the most atypical things he's ever recorded.
From *Conditions Of My Parole* (2011)

So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish
A Perfect Circle

APC's new album busts the doors wide open stylistically, and never more so than on this. Musically it's the closest they've ever come to writing a pop song, although lyrically, with its scabrous references to dead celebs, plastic surgery and mushroom clouds, it's gloriously dark.
From *Eat The Elephant* (2018)

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WITHOUT A GUITAR
ALL THIS
WOULD JUST BE
VANDALISM.
THE POWER OF MUSIC!

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"Even the squeaky-clean pop people would be up all night doing the same stuff we were doing, it was just they didn't talk about it."

GINGER WILDHEART

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BRITROCK THE REVENGE

Ginger Wildheart, Terrorvision's **Tony Wright** and Reef's **Gary Stringer** share tales of excess and mayhem ahead of their bands' Britrock Must Be Destroyed! joint UK tour.

Words: **Johnny Sharp** Photos: **Will Ireland**

There are many famous hotels dotted around the globe that can lay claim to a history of glamour, decadence and celebrity high jinks. From the star-kissed chic of LA's Chateau Marmont to Singapore's Raffles to the Paris Ritz, their reputation precedes them. But can you get a bed for the night at one of those for as little as a taxi ride into town, drink all night, get a full English breakfast and have the management take a lenient view of the carnage you've wreaked along the deep-pile-carpeted corridors? Not a chance.

And although you probably can't do that any more at London's once-infamous Columbia Hotel, for much of the late 20th century, this slightly fraying Victorian townhouse turned two-and-a-half-star 'Independent family-run hotel' on Bayswater Road was a regular home from home for visiting bands.

Why it became so popular has never been entirely clear. Were they more tolerant? Turned a blind eye to dubious shenanigans? Cheaper? More convenient? Maybe. What's true is that the Columbia's bar stayed open later than most, often all night – an important consideration for anyone in the creative industries.

The Columbia reached the apex of its notoriety in the mid-90s, not long after Oasis had named their first 12-inch after it. But while Britpop was getting hyped to the skies, the same hotel was also frequented by denizens of a scene that was its scuzzier, hairier, louder and arguably superior cousin. Naturally, we took to referring to the scene as Britrock.

Three of the acts loosely herded under that umbrella have now been reunited on a UK tour with the typically self-deprecating title Britrock Must Be Destroyed!. Tattooed Tyneside scuzz-punk hedonists The Wildhearts, maverick Bradford urchins Terrorvision and Somerset groove-rockers Reef will co-headline a rotating bill that's already looking like selling out, while eyeing up venues abroad.

So the Columbia seemed a natural venue at which to meet up with the frontmen of those bands to discuss their memories of that scene.

Terrorvision's Tony Wright is the first to wander through the doors of our surprisingly plush function room, a cheery, gap-toothed Yorkshireman in brothel creepers and Dennis The Menace-style stripy jumper (which he upgrades to a rhinestone shirt for the photos), telling us about the coffee shop-cum-printworks he now owns in Otley, Leeds. He's followed by Reef's beefy belter Gary Stringer, whose trilby, big boots, jeans, beard and trench coat could see him pass for a rogueish long-lost Dingle uncle in *Emmerdale*, except with a West Country accent.

The diverse spread of dialects is complete when Ginger Wildheart's Geordie brogue precedes him into the room, the years betrayed only by a pair of horn-rimmed specs and slightly bushier eyebrows.

So, what are your abiding memories of this particular hotel?

Tony Wright: I've just looked in the bar and I'm disappointed that they've fixed the service hatch. We used to have a trick where we'd stick a ciggie in a little gap in it and that would mean the barman would have to go upstairs to get it working again, and we could all help ourselves to free drinks.

Gary Stringer: Even if you weren't staying here, you'd often end up back here.

Tony Wright: Yeah, at three or four in the morning, because nowhere else would serve you. And you could get into trouble without getting done for it.

Ginger Wildheart: I think we probably all met each other in here at some point, but can't remember.

When you look back, did you feel that you were part of a scene, whether it be Britpop, Britrock or whatever?

GS: I loathed most of Britpop. Fucking hated it. I don't want to wrap myself in a flag – I'm a musician…

TW: Unless it's the Olympics, then you'd be up for the flag thing. And if it was the Olympics, Britrock would have been the hundred metres, and Britpop would have been… curling? I mean, a lot of Britpop celebrated the wrong bands. Why would you have Blur and Oasis if you could have Pulp, or someone like Space who had great lyrics and were a bit jazzy and different?

GS: It was a blessing and a curse. You feel like it's marketing bullshit, but it means you're part of a thing, not just disparate bands, and you get talked about all over the world. ▷

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Ready to rumble: the three amigos (l-r Ginger, Gary Stringer, Tony Wright) at London's infamous Columbia hotel.

The early nineties must have felt like a good time to be on the way up in a rock band.
GS: I certainly wouldn't swap it.
TW: Yeah. I mean, we'd come out of the eighties, with all the synthesisers and production on everything, and then once grunge came in, really loud guitars were suddenly back.
GW: In the late eighties, people were selling their gear to buy 303s [Roland synth/sequencer]. Which is fine, but until you find something you can convince me sounds better than an electric guitar, I won't believe it's ever going away.
TW: It got rid of all the superficial stuff. If you were a rocker, you didn't have to have long hair or be a dresser or wear waffle pants and slip-on shoes. Also, you were allowed to dance. When we started, people thought if you weren't just about headbanging, you couldn't be rock.
GS: Yeah. We wanted to play rock'n'roll, not just hard rock – we wanted to make the girls dance. Sometimes you go to metal gigs and there's ninety per cent blokes – boring. We were young and full of testosterone and we wanted to make the girls shake their hips!

But you didn't have the chance to stick a video up on YouTube or a tune on SoundCloud and hope a few people shared it. You had to sign to a label – or so everyone thought.
GW: Back then the DIY approach was what you did before you could play very well. Then you got in a band who were good and who were getting an audience, and a record contract was the next on the list. Not a *good* record deal, just any deal. We definitely signed a bad one… and I'd go back and do exactly the same thing again.
GS: But everything was paid for for a while, and that was a blast, weren't it?
GW: Oh aye. And even if you knew the money was ultimately coming out of your pocket, it didn't matter.
GS: We made three records in Los Angeles, stayed out there for three months. The record company fly you in First Class, stay at the fuckin' Chateau Marmont. That's not happening nowadays unless you're Justin Bieber or something.
TW: You always think you could have done things differently, but sometimes it's the things that go wrong that are lucky for you. EMI asked us to come to London and play a showcase, and they sent money up for us to get down to these studios. So we thought it would be good to keep the money and rent an old ambulance for fifty quid. But we got as far as Sheffield and broke down, and we didn't get to London till about eleven o'clock.

> "I loathed most of Britpop. F**king hated it. I don't want to wrap myself in a flag."
> GARY STRINGER

We rang the A&R guy and said: "We're here!" And he says: "Well, you've fucked it. The head of the label has gone out to a party now. He's not going to see you." And we were like: "Well, ring him and tell him to come over."

Finally he turns up, still in his suit. We play a few things just to him in this studio, a completely sterile environment, and I remember him just sitting there and going [turns nose up]: "Nah." But because he'd been to a party, his girlfriend was with him. And she said: "Oh go ooon!" He said: "Really?" She said: "Yeah, they're really niiice!" And he went: "Oh, alright then." So if we'd have turned up on time and done shit right, maybe we would never have got signed.

At this point in proceedings, we find that this is possibly the only hotel in London that doesn't serve food at lunchtime. However, it does serve drinks – clearly they still have their priorities right. And although some of our party have enjoyed uncharacteristically restrained starts to the year – Tony's been on a vegan diet, Ginger reckons he's got "bored of drinking" – they don't take too much persuading to wet their whistles. After all, it's early afternoon, and this time 20 years ago they might already have been pissed.

GS: I've always enjoyed drink, and I still do. But we were mainly into weed, really. And the best thing is when you're nineteen and you're waking up on a tour bus, and you realise you don't have to get up at eight or nine in the morning, but you can go to bed at that time and still get a good sleep before sound-check.
TW: In Bradford we were getting on a bus to go to work or college, and it's the same every day. Then suddenly we were on a bus on tour, and every day you open the door and it's a different place. To some people that would be like hell, twelve blokes travelling thousands of miles on a bus. But to us…
GW: And you're still drinking all night, watching people on their way to work in the morning, when you're just about to go to bed. It wasn't just us, either. Even the squeaky-clean pop people would be up all night doing the same stuff we were doing, it was just they didn't talk about it.

But then the boredom sets in. I recall travelling with The Wildhearts on their tour bus in the nineties, and after cracking open their first beers with breakfast, they devised some novel ways of entertaining themselves. One included card games for forfeits, one of which was that the loser had to take a Tuc biscuit, wipe it around the underside of a toilet rim and eat it. Led Zeppelin probably never had to plumb such depths of indignity.

GW: Oh God. I feel sick just thinking about it. Another one was when we had this horrible big bus driver who had a heavy cold, and when he blew his nose into a tissue, the person who lost the card game had to eat the tissue.
GS: And you wonder why you all fell out!
GW: This was the bonding part of it!
TW: I used to peel open all the Babybels from the catering at the venue, then take all the soap off the sink and replace them with Babybels. While I was waiting in the dressing room for the next two hours, I'd be chuckling to myself at someone trying to get a lather with a bit of cheese.
GS: We always slaughter a cuddly animal before we go on stage. Being West Country boys, that's our way. But Babybels? No way. We wouldn't go that far. That's just depraved.

Of course, it helps if you've got a major drinks manufacturer giving you endless supplies of alcohol. And when Terrorvision got a No.2 hit in 1998 with the Mint Royale remix of *Tequila*, they didn't have to worry about where their next margarita was coming from for quite some time…
TW: It was great! They said that tequila sales went up phenomenal amounts. So to thank us, a lady from Mexico came over from Jose Cuervo, and she brought a big box of tequila. She went through it all, telling us how rare these drinks were – this is one of only ten in the world; this is a hundred years old; this is Jose's out of his personal cabinet… and we necked every one of them. It's made for drinking though, isn't it?

Another time, we were invited to this shopping centre in Spain, where every single shop was just a different tequila bar. When you went round this centre and came out the other side it were just a pile of bodies. It were brilliant! People fighting, bins being thrown around, it turned into a riot. This taxi driver accused us of damaging his car, and we had to race to the airport so the police wouldn't arrest us. So we have fond memories of that time. I just wish we'd called the song 'Ferrari', and got something valuable out of it.

> "If you didn't drink, your liver wouldn't get any exercise at all."
> TONY WRIGHT

Sounds like some of you had a few health scares. How close to death did you come?
GW: Oh, all the time. I've been in jail in Thailand… I used to OD once a week. Danny [McCormack, Wildhearts bassist] used to do it once a day. And that's not including being on a motorbike heading towards the edge of a cliff, and all of a sudden the bike flips around. Or being in a car and all the electrics cut out and you're going round a bend on Malibu Canyon. I've had fuckin' tons of lives. That could have been the one! I don't believe there's anything keeping me here. But I never used to question it. I can't remember thinking: "That was a close shave. I'll keep myself together now…"
TW: I notice the carpet patterns in this hotel are still very similar. In fact, the carpets being so poor, it were a lifesaver. I remember sitting on the floor of this hotel, going in and out of consciousness, but then thinking: "This pattern is horrendous. It is *not* going to be the last thing I ever see or get found dead on." So I dragged myself back to life.
GW: God yeah. We were too vain to die! I remember ODing on me bed in North London, with me fucking trackie bottoms on and a crappy T-shirt, and I thought: "I can't be found dead by *Kerrang!* dressed like this…"

Ginger, your bandmate Danny's had a tough time, having lost a leg.
GW: Well, it depends what you mean by a tough time. That fucker should have died several times! And he's come out of it with a leg missing. For anyone else it would be awful, but he's got off really light! All his mates are dead – all the people he used to do drugs with. He's the only one living.

You all look amazingly well. Dare I suggest you're walking adverts for rock'n'roll excess?
TW: Hammering it is one of the best exercises you can do. If you didn't drink, your liver wouldn't get any exercise at all. I'll be walking round Sainsbury's and I'll see the lad who captained the football team at school, and has his own plumbing business, and he looks about sixty-three. It's because they don't have anything to look forward to – they don't have any excitement in their lives!
GW: I think I've somehow managed to look better with age – I was a hideous young man! You two are both lookers, I was an ugly fucker, and now… well, I'm arguably the hottest one among us.

You seem to have pulled your classic line-ups back together. Does time heal all wounds?
GW: Definitely. The problems were all heightened by what drugs you were on. Me and Danny didn't speak to each other for ten years, and neither of us know why! It was one of these deep-seated grudges, until we got older and you say: "I need to go and ask what this is all about." And they say: "I thought *you* were the one not speaking to *me*?" And although you say you don't care what people think when you're younger, you *really* don't care when you're older.

And here you are again. What parts of the new tour are you most looking forward to?
GS: Just playing rockin' shows, as ever. That's it.
GW: There was a question of: "Where do you want to headline?" And I was like: "I wanna go on first every night so I can have a night out!" They're like: "You're not allowed to go on first." So we're being forced to headline gigs! But we're all going to be put in front of a bigger audience, many of whom won't have seen us before. Cos there's three very different groups, and people will be like: "Oh, I never really listened to them before." So if we all pull our A game out, we can all win new fans.
TW: And we might remember meeting each other this time.

The Britrock Must Be Destroyed! UK tour runs from May 4 to 26. For tickets, visit britrock.seetickets.com

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THE LIFE OF BRIAN

Championed by fellow blue-collar rocker Bruce Springsteen, **Brian Fallon**, the Gaslight Anthem frontman and rising solo artist, is "very optimistic about the ability of music to comfort people".

Words: **Paul Rees**

Brian Fallon recently delivered his second solo album, *Sleepwalkers*. Like its 2016 predecessor *Painkillers* (excellent, by the way), it mines a rich seam of Springsteen-esque blue-collar rock with pronounced Stax/Motown inflections – as evidenced on such standout tracks as *Forget Me Not* and *If Your Prayers Don't Get To Heaven*. If the Boss was 30 years younger and heavily tattooed, he would probably sound a lot like Fallon does on *Sleepwalkers*.

In fact, fellow Jerseyite Springsteen became one of The Gaslight Anthem's most vocal champions, getting Fallon up to sing with him and the E Street Band when they headlined both Glastonbury and London's Hyde Park in the summer of 2009.

Following 2014's *Get Hurt*, their fifth, highest-charting but most uneven album, The Gaslight Anthem announced they were going on an indefinite hiatus. At the time, they claimed not to know how to progress the band. In January this year it was revealed that they would regroup in June for a tenth-anniversary performance of their watershed 2008 album *The '59 Sound* at New York's Governor's Ball Festival, and more recently a tour with UK shows in July was announced.

Get Hurt found Fallon brooding over the collapse of his 10-year marriage to wife Hollie. The sprightlier *Painkillers* marked an artistic recovery, accelerated on *Sleepwalkers*, which suggests he's in a happier, if still uncertain, frame of mind.

Although he speaks with a kind of puppyish enthusiasm, Fallon is now pushing towards 40 and admits to having gone through a little bit of an existential crisis. "That may sound stupid," he says, laughing, "but music still feels to me like a young person's game. And one thing I definitely don't want to see as a fan is someone pretending to be young. One of the questions I had going on all through making the record was: what are you allowed to do as a thirty-seven-year-old with two kids? Can you get away with jumping up and down and liking The Jam still?"

What resolutions have you arrived at?
I haven't come up with any answers whatsoever. For a while there I was sort of casting around in the dark at songs. I was writing a bunch and kind of getting nowhere. Eventually I reached the conclusion that the only thing I can do is what I do; whatever it is that I feel is going to make me and the people that accept my music happy and have it reaffirm their today. Because all you've got is today. It sounds like something you'd read on a bumper sticker but it really is true.

> **"I don't feel the need to change the face of music at all. I just always wanted to be part of the overall story."**

The good part was that I had Ted [Hutt, producer of *The '59 Sound*] to call on. I asked Ted to introduce me to myself back when I made *The '59 Sound*, because you don't have any kind of objectivity at that age. He said the biggest thing he remembered about me was that I didn't have any awareness of what other people were going to think. I did what was exciting to me and kind of didn't worry about it. He told me I was very immediate. That sounded good to me. So I said to myself: "What excites me now as a thirty-seven-year-old?" Well, I've loved soul music my whole life. That rhythm said something to me and that gave me a starting point. A lot of the new songs came from those soul rhythms. I began by making drum loops that had the tempo and feel of soul tracks, and wanted to see if I could write songs around those, rather than a more typical rock'n'roll beat.

Lyrically it's a more subdued, reflective record. There's a sense throughout it of you putting yourself back together.
Yeah, well, that comes right along with the part of asking what do you do when you're thirty-seven. That can weigh heavy, and you can choose to get morose, or take a more positive spin, which I think is what I did. You can look around at what's going on and think there's nothing to do but give up, or you can believe in the fact that lots of things have changed through the course of history, so why not now?

What first fired your passion for music?
The owner of the local record store bought a copy of the first Clash record and gave it to me. He told me if I didn't like it I could hand it back. I took that record home, and when I first listened to it, and especially *(White Man) in Hammersmith Palais*, I got everything I had previously heard in the protest songs of Dylan, the harmonica of Springsteen and even the reggae I'd discovered through Bob Marley, but also this new thing that I could identify with as a teenager. That put everything into perspective. When I heard Joe Strummer sing, I felt for the first time that this wasn't someone else's music – those were my people.

Going from there into your first bands, Amping Copper and This Charming Man, what, or who, were you hoping to emulate?
I was just swinging the bat at anything I could get. I was cutting my teeth, figuring out the craft ➢

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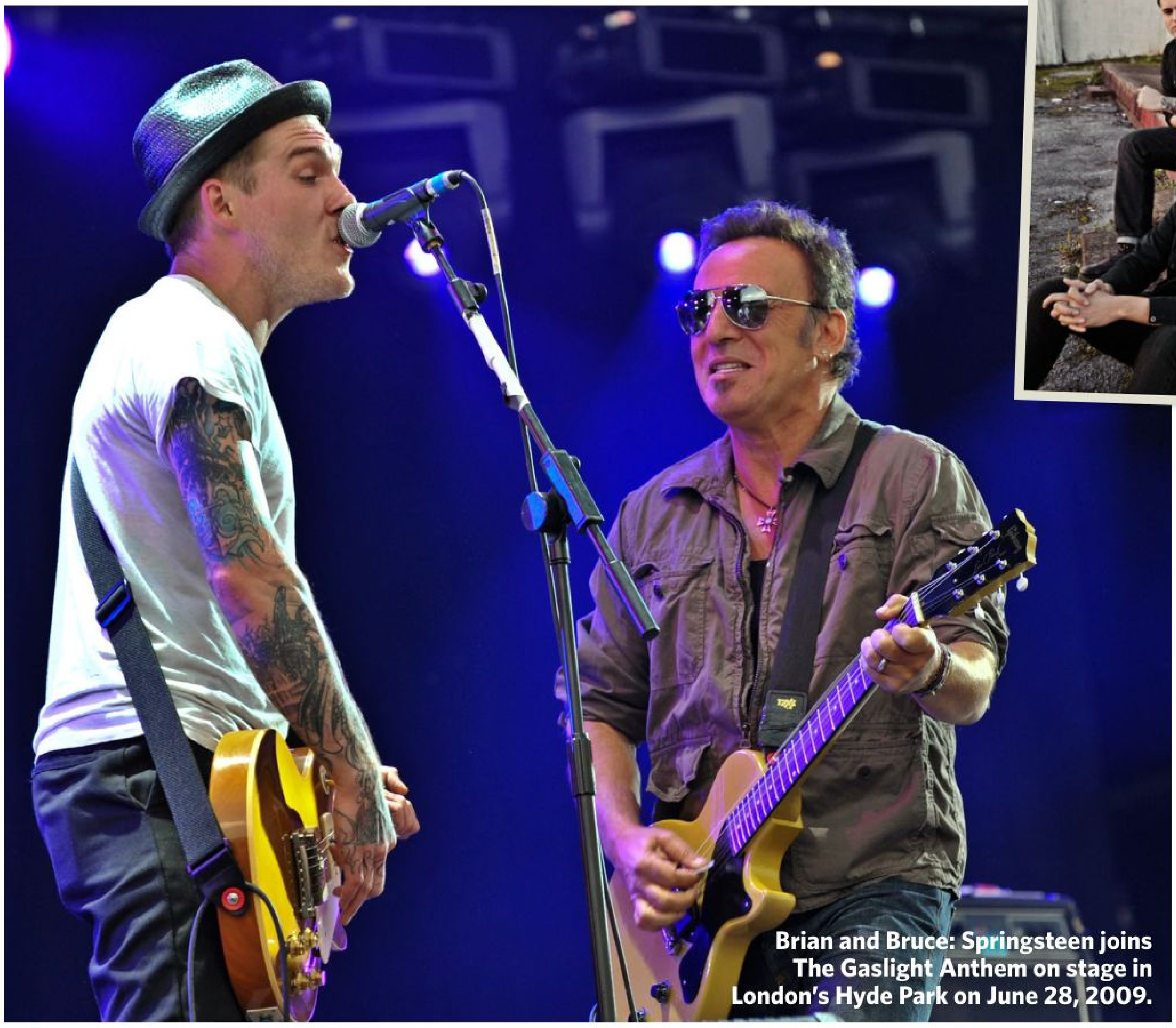

Brian and Bruce: Springsteen joins The Gaslight Anthem on stage in London's Hyde Park on June 28, 2009.

The Gaslight Anthem: (l-r) Alex Levine, Benny Horowitz, Brian Fallon, Alex Rosamilia.

of songwriting and what it could do. I would take from every influence that I could find. The early music that anybody writes is all about discovery. You have to write songs in order to work out where you lie and what your strengths are.

Ever since, you've been very specific about acknowledging those influences, honouring the debt, such as referencing Springsteen, Tom Petty and Johnny Cash in your lyrics.
I feel like my job is different to a lot of the people I listen to. I don't feel the need to change the face of music at all. I just always wanted to be part of the overall story, to add a page in the book. That's the goal for me.

Two other typical traits of your songs are that they encapsulate the wide-eyed sense of being young, and all the possibilities of youth; and, like Springsteen, they make Jersey sound like the most evocative place on earth.
If you look at it superficially, Jersey is Newark Airport and toxic fumes spewing into the atmosphere. It's a wasteland. But then there are the good parts. There's the ocean. To me, the ocean is the end of the world and the beginning of the universe. The land is stopping and there's something infinite in front of you that you can't possibly comprehend. That kind of encourages this mindset of: "Well, what will happen if I jump?"

Altogether, that's what happens when I put aside all my fears of what people are going to think of what I do. The bottom line is that I'm still very optimistic about the ability of music to comfort people. I believe in the power of the song still. I believe that some kid in their bedroom can be sat with a guitar or at a piano and become the next Adele or whoever. There's no reason that can't happen, in spite of all the odds stacked against it.

Speaking of music as a tool of comfort, did you use it to help heal yourself through the making of *Get Hurt*?
Sure. That was a real tailspin there. You get stuck in a rut and don't see a way out of it. Or at least I don't. And then you can hear a song that somehow lifts you up to another perspective. Navigating that stuff is tough, especially in the kind of minor public eye that we had. Thank God I wasn't a celebrity.

If I'm honest about it, that record is always going to puzzle me. It was such a confusing time in general. We tried to do something specific and then didn't go all the way with it, we sort of pulled back. I'm not embarrassed by it, but I wouldn't make it again.

"I wouldn't want to do anything to please someone else's idea of what they think I should be."

What did you learn about yourself going out on your own with *Painkillers*?
I learned that I could do it. I didn't know if I would be able to strip everything back and release a record on my own that anyone would care about. It was a case of working out what I could do. I was completely up in the air, so I took it back to basics.

Does having made *Sleepwalkers* mean there's now a sense of permanence to you being a solo artist?
Well, it doesn't go away now, because it's got a story started. The book is open, so the pages have to be filled. Regardless of what happens in the future, whether the band gets back together or it doesn't, I will have to continue down this path, no matter what.

Aside from The Gaslight Anthem, you got involved in a couple of other side-project bands: the Horrible Crowes and the more folk-rock Molly And The Zombies. That suggests you don't like having time on your hands.
Because there's so much music that I like, and what else can I learn? Yesterday I was working with a younger guy who produces a lot of pop music. We were just kicking song ideas around, but he was teaching me so much about different kinds of processing and digital recording. I don't know that any of that is for my own music, but it's so interesting for me to find out about new things.

I've been trying to mix it up, too. Like, I've been taking piano lessons. I want to see how far I can take this thing and see what else I'm able to do. I'm thinking too about how many other projects I might be able to get my hands in on.

Is getting older on your mind?
I don't feel old by any means, but also I don't see the future now as being infinite. Having kids puts that right into perspective for you real quick. That lets you know that you're clearly not immortal. When you're faced with that kind of thought process for the first time, it makes you realise that time and life are a little more precious than maybe you'd realised.

What stands out for you when you look all the way back to The Gaslight Anthem's first album, 2007's *Sink Or Swim*?
Immediately, the first thing that comes to mind is the time around *The '59 Sound* when Bruce [Springsteen] held us up. We shook the earth enough for The Boss to go out of whatever world he's living in and buy our stupid record that we made in two weeks for very little money. For him to then listen to it and get us up in front of what felt like the whole world at Glastonbury and Hyde Park, I had never considered that as even a possibility in my life. It's like winning the lottery.

Any regrets?
I don't think I'll be putting out anything I'm not so sure about again. I wouldn't want to do anything to please someone else's idea of what they think I should be.

And how far do you look to the horizon? What's next?
Right now I'm thinking about the shows and how to make them the best I can. That's the next phase. I'm also constantly practising and trying to learn. But what the next record will be like and who I'll do it with? I couldn't even guess that far ahead. I would just be happy to get to the next record.

Sleepwalkers is out now via Virgin EMI.

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DEBATE OF THE DECADE (THE 90s, THAT IS)

Hello. Of course I disagree with your list of 100 albums, as it would be virtually impossible for two people to compile the same list, and normally I wouldn't write because of that. But Tesla.

I appreciate some classics were left out because you don't really cover death and black metal, and I'm sure the omission of, among others, *Burn My Eyes, Achtung Baby, Come Find Yourself, Korn, Follow The Leader, Smash, Pride & Glory, Candlebox, How To Win Friends And Influence People, Live Through This, Holy Soldier, Jagged Little Pill, Wither Blister Burn + Peel, Draconian Times, Native Tongue, Flesh & Blood, Astro Creep 2000, Freedom* (by Whiteheart), *Collective Soul, Tragic Kingdom, Roots, Total 13, Fear Of The Dark, SOAD, In A Reverie, Repeater* and *Bossonova* can be argued over a pint with all parties grudgingly admitting: "I see your point." But *Psychotic Supper*?

As I kept reading the mag, I was thinking: "Jings! It's even higher than I thought they'd give it." But then… So, can you please dedicate an entire article to this masterpiece? Just say it was a typo that Metallica got No.1. In saying that, I've thoroughly enjoyed all the 'Real Albums Of The…' issues and have listened to and purchased some new gems. I don't envy you trying to take on the noughties.

Kenny, via email

The Best Albums Of The 90s is my favourite thing for ages. I love it and hate it… In the intended way, I'm sure! Winger above Jeff Buckley? That Saxon album? Where's *Melancholie*? Not Soundgarden's best or Pearl Jam… *Nevermind* below Thunder? Wildhearts YES! YES!

PityMyBrain, via Twitter

Some cracking albums in 100 Greatest Albums Of The 90s – still my absolute favourite era for rock music. But – and it's a big but – how can you put Supergrass (shudder) in there yet not find room for *Angel Dust*?! Hang your heads in shame, *CR*! I won't be buying… Ah, who am I kidding? Keep up the good work, just don't do that again, you tykes.

Luke Patrick, via Facebook.

Sipping a hot cocoa at home on a freezing cold and snow-laden evening, I can't help but be disappointed that you've neglected Bryan Adams's *Waking Up The Neighbours* from The Real 100 Greatest Albums of the 90s in your latest issue. Released in 1991, this album spawned rockin' singles like *Can't Stop This Thing We Started, There Will Never Be Another Tonight* and *Touch The Hand*, as well as the power ballad that set British chart history by being the UK No.1 single for 16 consecutive weeks – *Everything I Do (I Do It For You)*. I feel that the kid who wants to rock and who will always be 18 till he dies has been disappointingly overlooked.

Richard Evans, via Facebook

BUT YOU CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE

The list underlines how terrible the 1990s was for rock. Established artists producing past their best, one-trick-pony grunge bands adored by the cloth-eared wanting their own punk year zero, and kids' music from the likes of Oasis show how great the previous decades actually were.

Robin Smith, via Twitter

I'm not a big fan of these 'lists', they're so subjective. Seems to me it's easier to have the lists than to write interesting articles.

Gareth Scott, via Facebook

Another lazy issue. Bloody 'best of' lists are boring and only of value to the person who wrote it.

Iain Loudon, via Facebook

Well, we like to think our 'list' issues also contain interesting articles. And in terms of it being 'another' list issue, we haven't done a list since our Real Albums Of The 80s, well over a year ago! But we do them from time to time because they're popular – and they provoke debate.

AND DON'T FORGET LUBRICATED GOAT…

Sugartooth [mentioned in the 90s 'Shoulda Been Huge' panel] were a great band indeed. However, their sound was proto-stoner rock, nothing "deliciously poppy" about them, not even their folkier moments. Other bands worth mentioning: Into Another, Grotus, the Jesus Lizard, Clawhamer, Buzzoven, Helios Creed, Tar, Liquid Jesus, Silverfish and Lubricated Goat… But as usual, no one was listening! Come to think of it, the first half of that decade was chock-full of superb bands!

Fernando Benítez, via classicrockmagazine.com

CLASSIC ROCK ALBUM OF THE WEEK CLUB

Every week we choose a classic album – some obscure, some well known – and share knowledge and opinion. Listen and debate with us at: teamrock.com/aotw. Have your say on the history of rock, one album at a time. And you might just see yourself in print.

Mob Rules
Black Sabbath (1981)

WHAT YOU SAID

Hai Kixmiller: How does it stand up today? Hmm, I think it's a prime example of what was and is NWOBHM. Hard-driving, fist-pumping guitar riffs. Songs about myths, occult, fantasy, horror. It's great catchy metal music that headbangers still pass on to the young blood and say: "Listen to this, raise your swill and devil horns and prepare to have your eyes opened and mind blown!"

Gary Claydon: Loses little, if anything, in comparison to *Heaven And Hell*, which itself holds its own with anything done by any Sabbath line-up. Simply a great rock album. *Sign Of The Southern Cross, Slipping Away, Falling Off The Edge Of The World* and the mighty *Voodoo* are all stone-cold classics.

Jim Linning: I can't find a weakness, and what seals the deal for me is that it comes in at exactly 40 minutes, so there is no wasted space – every second is vital, with no unnecessary noodling or fannying around. The production is also pin-sharp, preserving the power of Tony Iommi's riffs, the precision of Appice's drums, the thud of Geezer's bass and, possibly most importantly, the clarity of RJD's voice. Quite stunning, really.

Neil Wilson: It's the closest album – musically speaking – that is anywhere near the classic early sound of the band at their peak. While it may not have the commercial appeal of its predecessor *Heaven And Hell*, it does have those doom-laden undertones throughout, something the band hadn't captured since *Sabotage*!

Bob Zelenka: A metal classic for sure. Not on the level of *Heaven And Hell*, but still some of the all-time best Dio-sung songs.

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PEARL JAM
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LUKE MORLEY
@luzmor01
The first gig I ever went to was T Rex at Lewisham Odeon on July 9th 1971. I was only 11 years old but by the time I got on the on the bus home I knew what I was going to do with the rest of my life so, if you don't like my work don't blame me, blame Marc Bolan!!

STEVEN VAN ZANDT
@StevieVanZandt
Planet Earth:Blue Planet II. The perfect cleansing antidote to our dire daily politics. It is BLOWING MY MIND!

DAVID CROSBY
@thedavidcrosby
Falling in love with Joni was sort of like falling into a cement mixer... turbulent...

JOE BONAMASSA
@JBONAMASSA
Was gonna play some slide but it's on stage and I can't be bothered. I call song in open A ... "Jet Lagged Eyes/Receding Hairlines". It's part of a concept album I am writing.

FISH
@FishDerekDick
The gutted 'ruin' and north gable end down. Really weird seeing this after having owned this building for over 10 years and so many memories from when it was the 'producer's suite' and home of Elliot 'Ness' Singerman in the days of the Funny Farm Studios.

RAINBOW: FABRICE DEMESSENCE/PRESS; BLACKBERRY SMOKE: DAVID McCLISTER/PRESS

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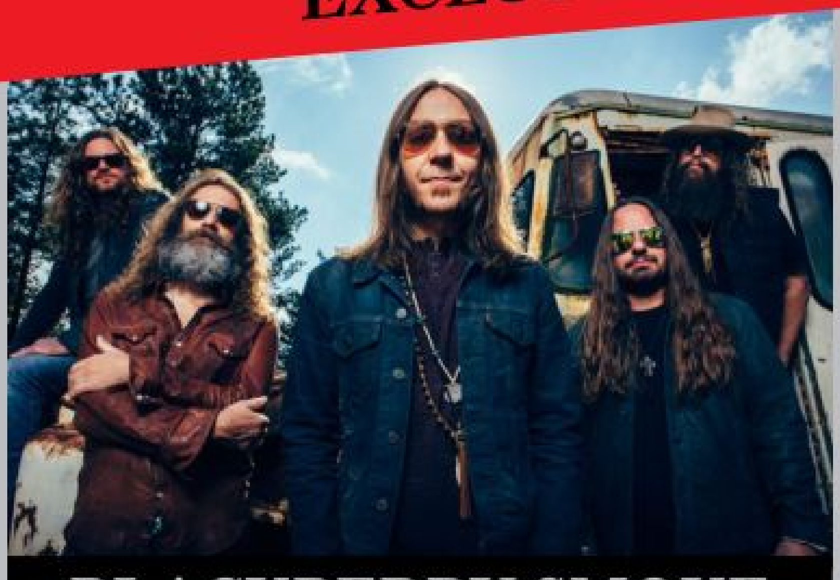

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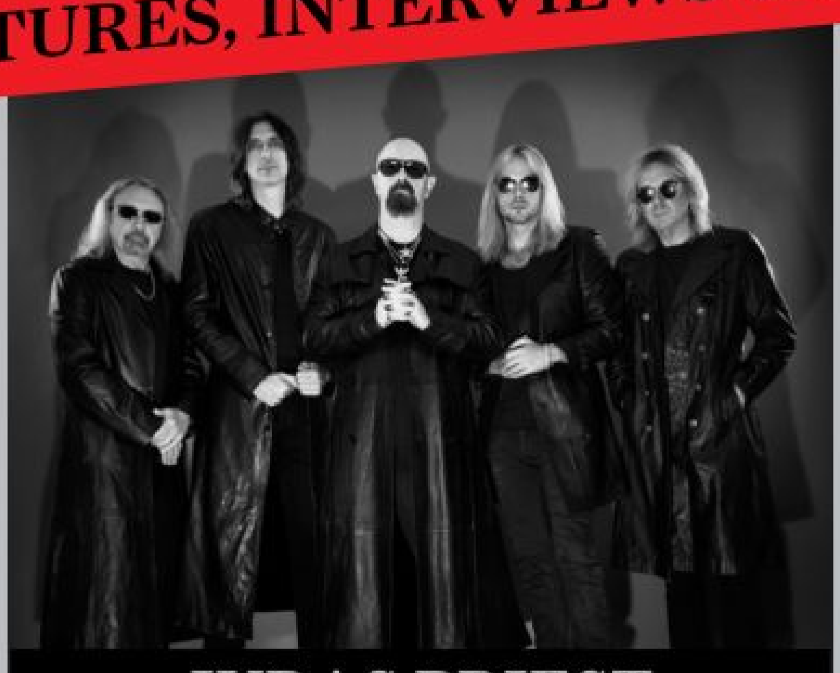

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Edited By Ian Fortnam
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ROSS HALFIN

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Blackberry Smoke

Find A Light *EARACHE*

Album number six from the front runners to become the new flag carriers for southern rock.

So, Lynyrd Skynyrd plan to roll up the Dixie flag and kick off their cowboy boots after one last rodeo. That means a vacancy is opening up for the role of Big Kahunas of southern rock's outlaw nation. Applicants must have a working knowledge of rock'n'roll, a pick-up truck full of Hank Williams records and a lifetime membership of the NRA.

Given the febrile state of music south of the Mason-Dixon line right now, there's no shortage of people waiting in line to throw their Stetsons into the ring, among them The Cadillac Three, Whiskey Myers, Lee Bains III & The Glory Fires, restless shitkickers one and all, resurrecting the immortal spirit of Ronnie Van Zant. And let's not rule out the Nashville crew: mavericks such as Chris Stapleton, Eric Church and Sturgill Simpson, who have stripped country music of its rhinestone chintz and dug deep into its rebel soul.

And then there's Blackberry Smoke. More than anyone else the Atlanta, Georgia band have engineered themselves into a position at the forefront of the modern southern rock pack. Their first five albums saw them staking out a pitch that exists somewhere between Download, Dodge City and a NASCAR rally. It's worked for them – their last record, *Like An Arrow*, hit No.1 in the US country and UK rock charts. Ker-twang!

Like Skynyrd and all the other great southern rock bands who came after them, Blackberry Smoke know the value of keeping it simple. They play music for the people, pure and simple, stripped of pretension and artifice. There's a chunk of rock'n'roll here, a little bit of boogie there, a touch of country twangin' for the good ol' boys. They deploy a bar-room piano for the good times, a crying guitar for the bad, and a little bit of fiddle for when they want things to get wild. It's an age-old formula, but one that they've got locked down.

It's also a formula that their new, sixth album follows to the letter. Frontman and chief songwriter Charlie Starr has talked about

DAVID MCCLISTER/PRESS

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wanting to write more "complex" songs, but there's little real evidence of that here. The album kicks off with a fade-in, but it's the sound of a fuzzy, choogling guitar rather than any incoming prog-style musical odyssey. The song it introduces, *Flesh And Bone*, arranges all the pieces in the correct order from the start: a big, bar-room beat, a riff that ZZ Top wouldn't be ashamed of, great washes of organ and a chorus the size of the Chattahoochee River. It's the kind of sound you can imagine spilling out of back-room bars and spit-'n'-sawdust saloons from Des Moines to Dartford.

Starr's proclamations aside, nobody is ever going to accuse Blackberry Smoke of overcomplicating things. *Find A Light* follows the old maxim of keeping it simple, stupid, right down to the route-one song titles. As the name suggests, *I'll Keep Ramblin'* is a no-frills boogie-shuffle featuring a guest appearance from rising pedal steel star Robert Randolph and some solid-gold testifyin' from a bunch of passing female backing singers. It's simple to the point of boneheadedness, but it's got guts. *Lord Strike Me Down* bundles the melody from The Beatles' *I've Got A Feeling* into the boot of its car and transports it over the state line to Muscle Shoals studio in Alabama. Best of all is *Nobody Gives A Damn*, a steel-plated ripper that sounds like AC/DC might if they'd grown up on Waylon Jennings and grits for breakfast rather than Chuck Berry and 60 Marlboro a day.

But Blackberry Smoke have also always been adept at taking things down a notch or two and finding a quiet corner in the bar-room of life. *I've Got This Song* might be a contender for Most Perfunctory Title Ever, but it's a beautifully low-key confessional, all haunting fiddle and heart-on-sleeve regret. Close behind is *Seems So Far*, a strummed meditation on aging that fleetingly nods to Bob Marley's *Redemption Song*, which, remarkably, isn't quite as embarrassing as it sounds.

There's nothing here to scare the horses. The closest they come to a radical left-turn is *Mother Mountain*, which connects Appalachian camp-fire tunes with the loose folk music Led Zeppelin were playing with back on their third album. And if there is a problem with *Find A Light*, that's it: they don't quite go far enough.

There are plenty of great songs on here, but no stone-cold classic – we're still waiting for a *Free Bird* or a *Sweet Home Alabama* or even a *Simple Man*. Six albums in, you can't help feeling they should be serving that kind of thing up along with the porridge. There's a danger that they're locking themselves into a holding pattern – a classic, classy one, but a holding pattern nonetheless.

Still, what *Find A Light* lacks in radical sonic experimentation – or, frankly, originality – it makes up for in heart. This is unvarnished, unpretentious music played by men who don't give a flying fiddle what's going on out there in more fashionable locales. Which is the spirit of southern rock distilled down to its very essence. In fact you'll be hard-pressed to find a better living, breathing, state of the southern rock nation address in 2018. When Lynyrd Skynyrd named their last album *Last Of A Dyin' Breed* they were suggesting that it was over. Done. With *Find A Light*, Blackberry Smoke have proved that ain't so.

'What it lacks in originality, it makes up for in heart.'

Dave Everley

The Kris Barras Band

The Divine And Dirty

MASCOT

Bon Jovi in a cowboy hat, via Devon.

Kris Barras may be an mixed martial arts fighter from Devon, but he looks like your typical southern rocker, with his burly frame, big yet manicured beard and arms covered in tattoos. The music on *The Divine And Dirty*, his second album and first with Mascot, is blues-driven rock with a unique edge.

It packs in a lot: sultry opener *Kick Me Down* includes a gospel choir, *Hail Mary* is thumping rock with a country twist, *Blood On Your Hands* goes heavy on the 80s hard rock, while *Stitch Me Up* is a playful, piano-driven romp.

Barras has name-checked the vocalists of Whitesnake and Thunder as particular influences, and indeed there's more than a hint of those hard-rock heroes to his voice – although it's more Jon Bon Jovi who comes to mind – and essentially *The Divine And Dirty* mixes southern jaunts with hard rock's glam side.

Hannah May Kilroy

Dizzy Reed

Rock'N'Roll Ain't Easy

GOLDEN ROBOT

GN'R sideman's solo debut, with help from hired Gunners.

His debut album was a work-in-progress for almost as long as GN'R's *Chinese Democracy*, so maybe the band's keyboard player Dizzy Reed felt like he needed some help to finish off *Rock'N'Roll Ain't Easy*. If so, then he made a wise decision.

With tinkling piano, hand claps and cooing backing vocals, recent single *This Don't Look Like Vegas* is the impressive result of a co-write with Black Star Riders' Ricky Warwick. The rest of this 12-track album doesn't always hit the same heights, but approaches it often enough to make it worth your attention. Guest guitarist and erstwhile Gunner Richard Fortus channels the malevolent twisting riffage of vintage Slash, while W.A.S.P.'s rhythm section of Mikes Duda and Dupke add muscle.

But it's Reed's voice that's the revelation – a quintessentially Hollywood drawl that tightens at the end of notes into an Axl-esque whine. This combination is most effective at high velocity, as on *Reparations*' snarling punk-metal bluster and *Dirty Bomb*'s squally licks and snarly vocals. Not altogether *Easy*, then, but they sometimes make it look that way.

Johnny Sharp

Spear Of Destiny

Tontine EASTERSNOW

Feisty fourteenth album asserts you'll never take him alive.

SOD frontman Kirk Brandon is a take-no-prisoners singer, his declamatory voice dominating events on this album with a primal, passionate, heart-on-forehead need to testify. Preaching and beseeching, he strides from anti-war imagery to intimate observation. Opening track *Brighton* details the city past and present, moving from mods and rockers to *'the Amex Stadium'* and *'deepest darkest Hove'*.

Musically there are sinister atmospheric chugs and post-punk guitar slashes in a sound that hasn't updated in years but maximises the punch-the-air factor of his chest-out anthems. He addresses CIA mind control (in *MK Ultra*) and the mistakes of history. He calms down a fraction for a couple of acoustic folky songs, but soon regains that rumbling, tumbling energy. It's unabashed big, bombastic music, aspiring to what he calls "the trumpets of revelation".

Chris Roberts

Axel Rudi Pell

Knight's Call SPV/STEAMHAMMER

Arise, Sir Axel.

Perhaps buoyed by celebrating his 25th anniversary with former members of key inspirations Rainbow, Dio and Uriah Heep at Germany's Bang Your Head festival not long before, Axel Rudi Pell and band sounded particularly invigorated on their previous album *Game Of Sins*, and the former Steeler guitarist maintains the standard here

Pell's Stratocaster-on-steroids tone drives riffed-up rockers, adds weight to the balladry and anchors the epic *Tower Of Babylon*. Overlaid with Johnny Gioeli's (Hardline) resonant vocal attack, underpinned by Bobby Rondinelli's (Rainbow) propulsive drumming and generously adorned with Pell's lyrical lead guitar playing, it's an album that shows its roots but still sounds fresh.

Rich Davenport

WorldMags.net

Rick Parfitt

Over And Out *EARMUSIC/EDEL*

Postumous first solo album from the late Status Quo guitarist is a fitting sign-off.

His Telecaster is silent. That right arm jackhammers no more. But one of the world's finest rhythm guitarists has left us a gem of a farewell.

Two months before he died on Christmas Eve 2016, Rick Parfitt told *Classic Rock*'s Dave Ling: "In my heart I'm a rocker. I've always been… If I'm going to make music, it's got to rock."

We might therefore expect *Over And Out*, his first solo album, to be in the vein of the vintage Quo music he revelled in revisiting on the Frantic Four reunions of 2013 and '14. But it's not. Instead, this album reflects Parfitt's acute pop sensibilities. Almost every one of the 10 tracks plays like a would-be single. Five of them sound like Quo, but the others most certainly don't.

There is a second version of the album, 'The Band's Mix' (available separately on vinyl and included on the two-CD collector's edition; the difference between the two is minimal), but the main, posthumous, mix by pop specialist Ash Howes is better. Parfitt would have wanted it this way.

Particularly impressive is the combination of Parfitt and his guitarist/keyboard player producer Jo Webb, who also co-wrote six of the songs, ranging from rocking opener *Twinkletoes* (with a Brian May guitar solo) to the helplessly romantic *When I Was Fallin' In Love*.

Those who prefer 12-bar rockers can find them in *Lonesome Road, Fight For Every Heartbeat* (with great piano by Shannon Harris, and a lyric that reflects on the health scares that ultimately ended Parfitt's life), and maybe even *Lock Myself Away*, a rockabilly shuffle.

And yet the strength of *Over And Out* might, ironically, be the softer rides: the title track (the poignant sound of a man reflecting on his advancing years) and the superb *Without You*, a ballad with piano, synthesised strings, sweeping backing vocals and genuine echoes of Queen.

There are two songs by David John (writer of hits for Quo since the mid-80s). The first, *Long Distance Love*, is a cheerful rocker. The second, *Everybody Knows How To Fly* is one of the album's cornerstones, and features with Bob Young on harmonica and some fine slide guitar by Wayne Morris.

Closer *Halloween* is the closest track here to the old-school – like one of those big numbers that Quo closed their classic albums with (think *Slow Train* on *Quo*, with percussive vibraslap and big keyboard fills). A great track, and even at five minutes it's over too soon. Which sums up how we feel about its creator.

Over And Out does Rick Parfitt proud.

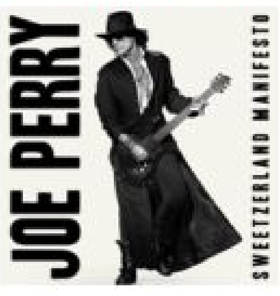
Neil Jeffries

Joe Perry

Sweetzerland Manifesto

ROMAN/AMPED DISTRIBUTION

All round to Johnny Depp's home studio – bring a bottleneck.



The mood is dark and shadowy. The bluesy style is loose, almost ragged, in places. Other than the searing guitar work it's a million miles from Aerosmith. *Sweetzerland Manifesto* easily outstrips any of Perry's solo albums since the first two in the early 80s, because it boasts three A-list singers.

First up and foremost is Terry Reid who, after instrumental opener *Rumble In The Jungle* (a rock'n'roll haka), just *slays* the first of his three performances on the album, the swinging shuffle *I'll Do Happiness.*

Robin Zander of Cheap Trick is on only one number but picks up the gravel-voiced baton and sings it impressively, while David Johansen (returning a favour after Perry played on his 1978 solo debut) rattles through *I Wanna Roll*. The New York Doll returns later (with harmonica) for a Muddy Waters-style *Haberdasher Blues* and the funky/Doors-y *I'm Going Crazy*. Perry sings on only one track, the curveball cover of Barry McGuire's 1965 hit *Eve Of Destruction* (drums by Johnny Depp), and his guitar shines far brighter on the Zep-like instrumental *Spanish Sushi*.

The album peaks with *Sick & Tired*, with a fine drum intro preceding a bitterly twisted lyric sung by Reid, and his closer *Won't Let Me Go* (a whirlwind of heavy-grooved psychedelia) is almost as good.

Neil Jeffries

The Scaramanga Six

Chronica *WRATH*

Self-releasing Yorkshire progressives' ninth album.

Formed by Morricone twins Paul and Steven in the late 90s but flying under the radar by self-releasing their music ever since, Huddersfield's the Scaramanga Six are up to their ninth album, making it a double to accommodate their expansive concept of a future world in ruins but still obsessed with the same "trivial crap".

Prone to big riffs with sudden detours, there are shades of Bowie and Hammill in the animated narratives which often find themselves abseiling over episodic, prog-like bombast, maybe tickling modern Marillion's testicles before uncorking something bigger of their own devising.

Controlled dynamite outbursts like *This Is Chronica*, with its strident Mick Ronson-style guitar, or sinister monologue *A Cold One At Wits' End* fly relentless invention with subtle humour, thus preventing such complex words and music flying up Muse's cosmic poop-chute.

A colossal undertaking from outside the mainstream well worth investigation.

Kris Needs

Cabbage

Nihilistic Glamour Shots

INFECTIOUS

Politically minded post-punks justify the buzz.

With a slew of vitriolic political EP's packed with austerity anthems and their notoriously rowdy but controversial live shows, Cabbage have caused quite a stir. Previously, the Mancunian post-punks have written songs about the NHS and compared the life of the Northern working class to the regime in North Korea. Now, their debut album *Nihilistic Glamour Shots* serves as a withering observation on Brexit Britain, soiled by Fat White Family scuzz and knotty, Cramps-esque psychedelia.

Reptiles State Funeral ominously name-checks Michael Gove, and a wiry *Arms Of Pleonexia* conjures the dark, jagged edges of The Fall and Joy Division while attacking Tory foreign and social policies ('*How long until we take responsibility?*'). *Post-Modernist Caligula* and *Preach To the Converted* are rackets designed to rile the people, delivered with kitchen-sink, deadpan humour from frontman Lee Broadbent.

Thrilling and confrontational, this album solidifies Cabbage as one of the UK's more exciting new prospects.

Dannii Leivers

The Amorettes

Born To Break *PV/STEAMHAMMER*

Made in Scotland for the love of rock'n'roll.

From Joan Jett to Motörhead to AC/DC, there is a grand tradition of rock'n'roll bands writing love songs to rock'n'roll itself. Makes sense. Rock'n'roll is

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faithful. It's a constant source of joy and self-expression. It's reliable. It'll never run off with the milkman – and even if it does it'll leave the most uplifting 'Dear John' letter ever.

Scottish trio The Amorettes come from this no-nonsense, if it ain't broke standpoint, as evidenced by *Everything I Learned (I Learned From Rock And Roll)* – a collaboration between frontwoman Gill Montgomery and Ricky Warwick – from this, their fourth album, and it sums up expertly their entire reason for existing. Clearly enamoured with the classic rock of the 70s and 80s, *Born To Break* is an unapologetically glam, high-octane, sass-drenched joyride from a power trio with the heart and the chops to make a well-worn path feel fresh and exciting.

Emma Johnston

Rocket Dolls

Deadhead ROCKET DOLLS

Grunge ain't dead, but it's not well either.

Deadhead is Rocket Dolls' second album, and for fans of this Brighton heavy rock trio it undoubtedly delivers what you're after. Anchored by the dark and rumbling opener *None Of This Is Right*, the band plow through a whole pile of post-grunge, stadium-ready navel-gazers.

Rocket Dolls are often compared to Alice In Chains. That's probably fair, but only in the most abstract way, like if you explained what Alice in Chains were to a 90s alt.metal covers band from Mars and they just took a wild stab at it. They're closer to stoner-pop almost-weres Supafuzz or nu grungers Fuel. It's an almost defiantly commercial sound that practically begs for an opening slot on an upcoming Nickelback tour.

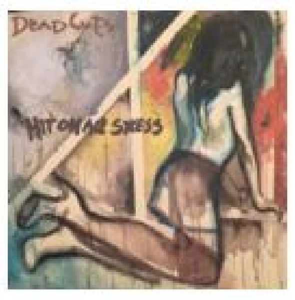
The band are clearly accomplished, the songs are tight and hooky, and the crystal-clear production already sounds like its pouring out of an FM radio. It just ain't very rock'n'roll.

Sleazegrinder

Deadcuts

Hits On All Sixess SPEEDOWAX

East London goth.



Describing an album's track listing as a "relapser's shit list" might have been semi-cool once, but Deadcuts, formed in 2014 by former Senseless Things leader Mark Keds and Jerome Alexandre from the Skuzzies (now also including the former's drummer Cass Browne), fly that tattered flag bombastically on titles such as *Opium Style*, *Craving*, *Dope Girls* and *My Delinquency*.

A marked sonic upgrade on 2014's *Dark Is The Night* debut, the sonorously gothic sound uncannily evokes *Ju Ju*-era Banshees with its clanging guitar motifs and thunderous drums, topped with mystery-man degenerate vocals often invoking the Psychedelic Furs' Richard Butler going cold turkey.

Summon The Witches ups the tempo with jagged power chords, and by closer *Don't Die Yet* they've reached an apocalyptic hell-gallop that has long put every control board dial into the red in its desperate quest to ejaculate the ultimate wet dope gutter dream.

Kris Needs

We Were Sharks

Lost Touch VICTORY

Punks have memories too.

Having a three-guitar attack might seem a little excessive for a bunch of hardcore pop-punksters, but Ottowa-based We Were Sharks have found space for it in their cluttered but clear sound, particularly when it comes to the brief breaks between the verses.

The band have been going long enough to start remembering what they've left behind, which is an ongoing theme. *Stay* is about summoning up the courage to leave it all behind, *Beyond Repair* is accepting that the relationship has stalled and getting out before you get trapped.

They've taken care with the lyrics, creating snapshots that let you fill in the bigger picture. They can be concise, too, as the 82-second *Ashley*, an alluring siren in a Nirvana T-shirt, demonstrates vividly.

Hugh Fielder

Gleb Kolyadin

Gleb Kolyadin KSCOPE

From Russia with elegance and earnestness.

In 2016, St Petersburg chamber-prog duo Iamthemorning won reverence with their *Lighthouse* album, with Marjana Semkina's distinctive voice soaring over Gleb Kolyadin's grand (in every sense) piano.

It seems a tad premature to be spinning off into solo albums, but for his Kolyadin calls in a host of names from the prog world as ballast. His Bach-meets-jazz opulence is abetted by Marillion's Steve Hogarth, Dream Theater's Jordan Rudess, Gavin Harrison, Nick Beggs, Theo Travis and others, and Hogarth's eerie, semi-spoken vocals fit the trembling, neo-Gothic atmosphere. This is perhaps a musician's album, in that peers will admire his skill and originality, while it could be rather challenging for the untrained. Its ebony and ivory elegies certainly aren't black and white.

Chris Roberts

The BellRays

Punk Funk Rock Soul Vol.2 CARGO

You're in love with rock'n'roll? So are The BellRays.

Since 1990, over the course of a dozen or so albums this Californian band – mainstays powerhouse singer Lisa Kekaula and guitarist Robert Vennum – have put together a series of high-octane albums that can strip paint from the walls, leave ear drums bleeding and generally rock out. Think the Stones, War, MC5, the blues rockers and you ain't far off.

Kekaula has an extraordinary voice, one minute recalling Chris Cornell (the vertiginous *Man Enough*) the next Tina Turner (balls-out rocker *Bad Reaction*). *I Can't Hide*, meanwhile, is a great old-fashioned Joan Jett-style pop-rocker.

If this dizzying array of styles – yes, punk, funk, rock, soul, and far, far more – starts to feel schizophrenic, it's because there is so much good stuff to choose from. Like their most obvious comparison point the mighty Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings, The BellRays feel a little too reverential of the past to ever break free. But who cares when it feels this good?

The American Primal Scream, with an incredible voice.

Everett True

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Danny Bryant: *Revelation* is the best album of his career.

DANNY BRYANT: ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

Danny Bryant

Revelation JAZZHAUS

With *Revelation*, Danny Bryant is plainly writing not because the album/tour cycle demands it, but because his sanity depends on it, following a brutal six-month period in which he lost his best friend and his beloved father, then fell into depression. The title track suggests the bandleader has been to black places indeed, its desolate piano, funeral-march horns and lyrical imagery of burning bodies and scythes setting up a primal-scream guitar solo and a devastating kiss-off: *'Called out to my father, swear I heard him cry/ Remember him so clearly, the day we said goodbye'*. Likewise *Shouting At The Moon*, a valedictory power ballad chronicling their last night together, is so candid that listening to it feels like snooping. And when *Yours For A Song's* outro suddenly steps up the tempo, there's a sense of Bryant being dragged along by a higher force.

When the emotional dust settles, you'd have to call it the best album of his career.

Mitch Woods

Friends Along The Way

ENTERTAINMENT ONE

Active on the San Fran scene since 1970, piano man Mitch Woods has evidently amassed quite a contacts book. On this album he deploys both Van Morrison and Taj Mahal on an upbeat *Take This Hammer*, collars Elvin Bishop for a manic *Keep A Dollar In Your Pocket*, and even exhumes John Lee Hooker on an intimate rendition of *Never Get Out Of These Blues Alive*.

Laurence Jones

The Truth TOP STOP MUSIC

Laurence Jones is shaping up nicely on this fifth release, walking a tightrope between brazen commerciality and blues savvy. At times he wobbles; *Keep Me Up All Night* and *Can't Go On Without You* have one beady eye on Nick Grimshaw's playlist. But songs like *What Would You Do* and *Give Me Your Time* are hooky and credible, suggesting he's found a way to sell records without selling out.

Malina Moye

Bad As I Wanna Be LEOPARD

All flipped Stratocasters and female empowerment, Malina Moye has been a head-turning presence since the turn of the decade, but post-Weinstein her shit-kicker soul-rock feels plugged in to the zeitgeist. At her baddest – the rampaging likes of *A Little Rough* and *Jumpin'* – she's brilliant, but she could lose slushy R&B slowies like *Are You The One* without anyone missing them.

Victor Wainwright & The Train

Victor Wainwright & The Train RUF

If you've ever wished that boogie-woogie wasn't so wearyingly derivative, you'll applaud veteran keyboard player Victor Wainwright for firing a rocket up its arse. Opener *Healing* sweeps you up with exuberance, *Wiltshire Grave* is a dirty Latin lurch and *Sunshine* nudges into psychedelia.

Joyous, eyes-wide-open stuff.

The Damned

Evil Spirits SEARCH AND DESTROY

Crowdfunded return, their first in a decade, keeps things neat.

At first, the opener on The Damned's 11th album reminds you of something you can't quite place. It's on the tip of your brain. Then the penny drops, from a faraway, unlikely place: it's the early Moody Blues. *Standing On The Edge Of Tomorrow* – a distinctly Hayward/Lodge phrase – has all the trimmings of the Brummies' hippie heyday: harmonies, a richly mixed rush to the refrain, and a dash of the-future-is-now sci-fi.

Dave Vanian has said that The Damned hired Tony Visconti (for nine intense days in Brooklyn) because they loved Bowie's *Blackstar*. What they got was the Visconti who, in Captain Sensible's words, "specialises in beautifully crafted old-school production". He first heard the ex-punk durables via Marc Bolan. He did work with the Moodies in the 90s, but that'd be stretching a point: while this is far removed from the experimental *Blackstar*, neither have The Damned turned into dark knights in black satin. They've made a solid, surging album that stirs up elements of rock's past in a salty brew.

What a writhing, wriggling mass of contradictions The Damned have always been, as discombobulating as opening a vat of snakes. From the purity of *New Rose* to protesting their skilled musicianship, from goth to the high camp of *Eloise*, from trashing their cred with the Captain's *Happy Talk* to winning it back via years of euphoric live shows, they've forged a peculiar path. *Evil Spirits* is a whirl of Shadows twang, steampunk and wailing guitar that embraces the ghosts of the 60s more closely than any punk notions.

While hooks like *'I'm a devil, a complicated rebel'* evoke images of Alan Partridge playing Nigel Farage in a motel bedroom mirror rather than Bela Lugosi, there's also a thread of seriousness. They lambast the way *'our masters'* have got us fighting each other, and the subject of *The Daily Liar* is obvious. The Damned, in their lyrics, sound more frightened than frightening: a just response to contemporary calamities.

Those 60s nods abide: the title track echoes *Love Potion No. 9* and indulges some Zombies-like keyboards. Vanian's clenched vocals refract Alice Cooper, though of course Sensible chimes in with chinks of cheeriness. Paul Gray returns on bass. Visconti busies it up, eking out build-ups and layering the ambient sound of a crowd arguing on *We're So Nice*, while closer *I Don't Care* gets jazzy.

Overall, though, this is a well-behaved, orderly Damned: stoic, steady-handed and spirited.

■■■■■■■■□□

Chris Roberts

Superchunk

What A Time To be Alive

MERGE

Home-town punk-poppers, still alive and kicking.

Power pop, melodic punk, agit-pop… call it what you will. North Carolina indie band Superchunk have been ploughing this fertile groove for nearly 30 years now and what they don't know about this music ain't hardly worth bothering with.

The title of this, their eleventh album, is ironic, inspired by the election of Donald Trump and the disbelief, anger and defiance that followed. As with most of their sets before, the music is taut, compressed and, in places, vulnerable (there's a deep melancholy behind plangent album closer *Black Thread*) and beautifully resonant. Frontman Mac McCaughan is still straining and fighting to retain every vocal line.

Other guests from Mac and bassist Laura Ballance's Merge label appear – the band want to retain a sense of community in the face of a massive racist political surge. The title track is bruising, a massive declaration of faith and avowal.

The only reason Superchunk aren't as big as, say, Green Day is their righteous DIY spirit – not for these home-town punks the easy major-label ride – and it's a spirit that stands them in great stead in 2018.

■■■■■■■□□□

Everett True

Derek Smalls

Smalls Change (Meditations Upon Ageing)

TWANKY/BMG

A suitably lukewarm solo venture from the Tap man.

In theory, an album made away from the shadows of Spiñal Tap's perceived creative dynamos should be rich in comic potential, but *Smalls Change* isn't quite the appendix or epilogue listeners might have been expecting. Instead, bassist Smalls, aka Harry Shearer, delivers only intermittently humorous paeans to being too old to rock: titles such as *Hell Toupee* and *Rock 'n' Roll Transplant* too blatantly telegraph their subject matter.

The all-star supporting cast, including Dweezil Zappa, Rick Wakeman, Joe Satriani and Donald Fagen, gamely play along (there's some fine playing here), but not enough of the gags land where Smalls/Shearer might have wanted them to.

The histrionic power ballad title track is an undeniable hoot. It's just a shame that so little of the rest of the album makes any lasting impression.

■■■■■■□□□□

Terry Staunton

Buffalo Tom

Quiet And Peace

SCRAWNY/SCHOOLKIDS RECORDS

Grunge's forest-rock critters can still bare their teeth.

It's twenty-five years since their epochal third album *Let Me Come Over* and though time has softened their grunge-country edges and their albums are few and far between, Boston's impressionistic rockers Buffalo Tom still know the power of a good old billow.

Ninth album *Quiet And Peace* is roughly one third quiet, peaceful and Chris Stapleton-like, as soft-focus Nashville rattlers like *Freckles*, *Slow Down* and *In The Ice* grow rugged and mountainous, as if invaded by Catskill wildmen midway through.

Elsewhere, *All Be Gone* and *Lonely Fast And Deep* recall the lumberjack Lemonheads of '93, but there's forward motion too. Bill Janovitz's classic country drawl is offset by sci-fi synths on the brooding drone that is *Least That We Can Do*, and there's a prevalence of bassist Chris Colbourn's vocals and a sprinkling of female duets: the luscious *See High The Hemlock Grows* and a spacious cover of Simon & Garfunkel's *The Only Living Boy In New York*, featuring Janovitz's daughter Lucy. Massachusetts' mightiest trappers, still catching big game.

■■■■■■■□□□

Mark Beaumont

The Z

People Of The Mirror World DETOUR

Trans-European sci-fi extravaganza.

With singer Zoot in Rome and multi-instrumentalist Sebastian Wilde in London, The Z (pronounced 'Zee') have created an ambitious concept album. It's based around a gaggle of underground artistic radicals, armed with the old Doors and Jefferson Airplane records they

THE DAMNED: STEVE GULLICK/PRESS

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play at their club the Mirror World, who are trying to free 2518 civilisation from zombie-like enslavement to handheld digital devices, 24-hour newsfeeds and corporate pop (surely they mean 2018?).

The sound is panoramic, even megalomaniac, as it plants Zoot's operatic collisions between Grace Slick, Nico and Siouxsie over dynamic backdrops straddling West Coast psych (*Save Me*), subterranean sex beats (*Laser Love*), early-70s Brit-prog (*Black Magic Queen*), stadium prog (*God Save Rock 'N' Roll*), glacial United States Of America future shock (*Heaven Is A Melody*) and Glitter Band glam (*Everything's Alright*). It was all mixed by ex-Primal Scream engineer Brian O'Shaughnessy in Walthamstow.

All told, zee Z (over the) top!

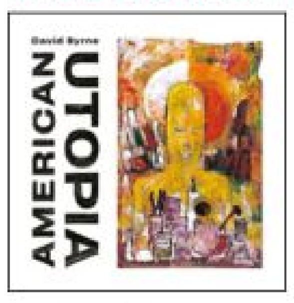
Kris Needs

David Byrne

American Utopia

TODOMONDO/NONESUCH

Ex-Talking Heads frontman's first solo album since 2004.



American Utopia is a spiritual accompaniment to David Byrne's *Reasons To Be Cheerful* series, a curated collection of stories, news and ideas that inspire optimism and hope in what are currently deeply angry and pessimistic times for America.

It's a laudable enough idea; optimism needn't be the prerogative of only the inane or the apolitical. And *American Utopia*'s songs are fondly crafted, meticulously, with tracks like *Gasoline And Dirty Sheets* and *Every Day Is A Miracle* taking you down the strange and bright byways of unconsidered Americana. *Everybody's Coming To My House*, meanwhile, a collaboration with artists including Onyx and co-writer Brian Eno, is cast in a long-standing Byrnian traditional thematic mould.

But for an album designed to promote well-being, it lacks the sheer, frantic, nervy élan of Talking Heads at full throttle. It's wise, but rhythmically, musically, it feels Byrne's age.

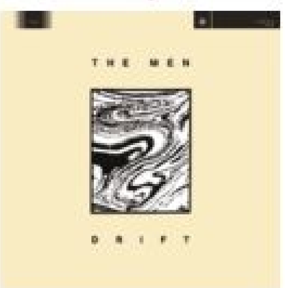
David Stubbs

The Men

Drift

SACRED BONES

Will the real Men please stand up?



Such has been the stylistic veering of Brooklyn's The Men from hardcore punks to purveyors of lo-fi country, heartland rock and back again, it's become pointless trying to second-guess where they're going to come from next.

Anyone expecting a continuation of predecessor *Devil Music*'s welcome back-to-basics approach is going to find themselves sorely disappointed. This time around, The Men have elected to throw everything in, but with added electronics and smokey jazz for good measure. The result is less a coherent statement and more a collection of songs that simply show off their eclectic influences and their ability to reproduce them well.

So while *Maybe I'm Crazy* adds another feather to their cap and *Secret Light* doffs it to The Doors' late vintage, it doesn't hang with *Killed Someone*'s snotty blast or the woozy, minimalist psychedelia of *Final Prayer*.

Don't say you weren't warned by the album's title.

Julian Marszalek

Fanny Walked The Earth

Fanny Walked The Earth

BLUE ELAN

A sting in the tail.

They may have elongated their name but they're still recognisably Fanny, the pioneering Californian all-girl quartet who rocked their way through the first half of the 70s. Some people never got past the name, which was certainly a distraction, but there was nothing gimmicky about their hard rock riffs and strong, melodic vocals.

There still isn't. They're down to a trio now but the attitude hasn't softened. Quite the reverse actually. The pure, Free-like tones of the early 70s have been replaced by a harsher sound, although the riffs themselves have changed little. And the innocent-sounding voices now have the kind of rasp that comes with maturity.

They also have more to sing about now than the rather coy romantic visions that originally characterised them. They've even had to make a 'clean' version of the album's lead track, *Lured Away*, that won't offend DJs or, more likely, their snowflake listeners.

Not that the snowflakes are likely to understand this album anyway. That would involve realising that their parents – or even their grandparents – still like to rock.

Hugh Fielder

Stone Temple Pilots

Stone Temple Pilots

WARNER

90s alt.rock titans step into a new era with a new frontman who has big shoes to fill.

Following the tragic deaths of their original frontman Scott Weiland in 2015 and then his replacement Chester Bennington last year, *Stone Temple Pilots* heralds another new beginning for the 90s alt.rock stalwarts. Inevitably, of course, all eyes and ears will be on new vocalist Jeff Gutt, who has the task of carrying his predecessors' legacies forward into the next chapter.

Luckily, in Gutt, a one-time *X Factor* contestant and frontman of nu metal band Dry Cell, the band have unearthed a voice that's spookily similar to Weiland and perfectly capable of hitting the highs and lows of the late frontman's baritone range.

Elsewhere, the music impresses too. *Middle Of Nowhere* and *Guilty* put a modern twist on the muscular melo-rock and massive hooks of STP's multi-textured, coming-of-age album *Tiny Music… Songs From The Vatican Gift Shop*. Meanwhile, *Roll Me Over* takes its cues from their grunge-indebted debut *Core*.

There are moments on this album when you wish founding members the DeLeo brothers had kept their foot on the gas: *Six Eight* is particularly bland, and only time will tell if Gutt can bring some of Weiland's much-missed loose-cannon swagger to the table. But in the meantime this is a promising first step into a new era.

Dannii Leivers

ROUND-UP: PROG

By Jo Kendall

Wilson & Wakeman: a celebration of songcraft.

Wilson & Wakeman

The Sun Will Dance In Its Twilight Hour

BLACKLAKE

Prog's latest dynamic duo, Headspace bandmates Damian Wilson and Adam Wakeman follow their acoustic *Weir Keeper's Tale* debut of 2016 with another pedal-off-the-metal set.

With connections to Ozzy Osbourne, an Iron Maiden tribute and *Les Mis* (Wilson played Jean Valjean in the touring version from 1998-2000), some red-blooded theatrics might be expected, but pure songcraft is celebrated here. Wilson is subtle and emotionally on point amid piano, acoustic guitar and cello backing.

Joined by guitarist Andy Dunlop (Travis), *Strictly*'s Hayley Stevenson (also beloved of Wakeman Sr) and Del Amitri drummer Ash Soan (Producers/Trevor Horn Band), this occasionally plants a size nine in Take That territory (*Shining A Light On A Miracle*) but with enough folk, baroque and soft prog touches to pull it back from key change-elevate pop.

It's catchy AF, though, and you'll soon find yourself raising an imaginary lighter to anthems such as *On This Battlefield*. *Laugh In Time*, meanwhile, out Cat Stevens Cat Stevens, and is utterly lovely.

The Osiris Club

The Wine-Dark Sea

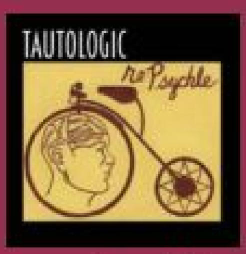
INDIE

Album number two and our heroes keep the cowls but discard their distractingly beaky plague-mask guises, lunging for Ghost's place on the goth-prog-pop podium. The Londoners do a damn(ed) fine job, whorling darkly trippy but tuneful invocations – The Mission to Opeth to King Crimson in one arc – with Ulver frontman Kristoffer Rygg's sardonic croon lent to *Island Of Stone*.

Tautologic

Re:Psychle

TURTLE DOWN



Meanwhile, in Chicago, Ethan Sellars has inhaled all the Frank Zappa, Tull and Canterbury Scene records and then come out with this. It might have taken him 18 years to follow up his self-titled debut, but his sextet's high-level musicality, imagination and satirical spin parallel Bristol's Schnauser on wonderfully bonkers tracks such as *Loud Shoes* and *The Whistler*.

Anna von Hausswolff

Dead Magic

CITY SLANG

Teaming up with producer Randall Dunne (Sunn0))), Boris, Wolves In The Throne Room), von Hausswolff achieves a new drone nirvana with her unique mix of soprano wail and minimalist-but-grand gothic church organ. It's Cocteaus meets Terry Riley via Shirley and Dolly Collins in Copenhagen's Marmorkirken ("the Marble Church"), and really quite extraordinary.

Birth Of Joy

Hyper Focus

GLITTERHOUSE

Having been immersed in a world of Deep Purple lately, it was a delight to find this, its Jon Lord-like Hammond at the fore for the Dutch trio's fifth release. Shades of (sorry!) *Taliesyn* and *In Rock* might be the speed-fuelled underpinning, but King Gizzard, The Doors and Hawkwind prevail amid some properly spooky occult jazz-rock, most notably on *Witches Hammer* and *Poor Duffy*.

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Manic Street Preachers

Resistance is Futile COLUMBIA/SONY

Welsh rockers return to stadium-sized anthemics on their thirteenth album.

Four years after they expanded their horizons with the critically feted synth-heavy Euro-modernism of *Futurology*, the Manics return to their heartland with *Resistance Is Futile*. The first album to be recorded at the band's new rural studio in Wales, it has a pleasingly boomy big-room sound, high in polish and rich in ripsnorting glam-metal guitar. With stalwart producer Dave Eringa back at the controls, this is vintage arena-rocking Manics, grandiose in scale and unusually buoyant in mood.

The album arrives at full roar with *People Give In*, which subverts its own wistful message of creeping midlife defeat by erupting into a mighty celebration of stoic survival against adversity. Propelled by orchestral strings, this rousing terrace chant is plainly aiming at *A Design For Life* heights. Mission accomplished. More anthemic ambitions follow with *Distant Colours*, James Dean Bradfield's bittersweet elegy for the lost monochrome certainties of his left-wing youth, and *Liverpool Revisited*, a sky-punching belter celebrating belated justice for the families of the Hillsborough victims.

The Manics have immortalised many cultural and political heroes on previous albums, but *Resistance Is Futile* must set a new record. Artist Yves Klein joins their hall of fame via *International Blue*, a lithe and melodic rocker, muscular but light on its feet. And David Bowie gets the affectionate pastiche treatment on *In Eternity*, with Bradfield mimicking his croaky vocal mannerisms over glammed-up synthesisers and lyrical Berlin name-checks. Fine sentiments, vividly expressed.

But two further tribute songs are a little bloodless. *Vivian* commemorates the Chicago street photographer Vivian Maier, whose remarkable private treasure trove of work only came to light after her death in 2009. Noble intentions, but let down by a stiff lyric and thin soft-rock arrangement. Likewise *Dylan And Caitlin*, a love letter to Dylan Thomas and his wife Caitlin Macnamara. Featuring guest vocalist Catherine Anne Davies, this prosaic duet falls far short of fire-breathing twin-voiced Manics classics like *Your Love Alone Is Not Enough*.

Marred in its latter stages by two or three blustery Manics-by-numbers tracks, the album concludes with Nicky Wire's grainy lead vocal on *The Left Behind*, a charmingly offbeat detour into 1980s indie-rock. More of these eccentric tonal variations would have been welcome on an album that emerges as a solid exercise in arena-sized anthemics, majestic in parts but not a career peak.

Stephen Dalton

Monster Magnet

Mindfucker NAPALM

The triumphant return of the lords of the wasteland.

Monster Magnet are the Cheech Wizards of satanic drug punks, the true originators of the whole bleary-eyed stoner rock movement. They were the first major-label band to truly represent the feral, revolution-now rock'n'roll underground since the Stooges. Sure, their brush with stardom was tragically brief, but they really freaked out the squares pretty good when they got there. And then they started to lose the plot.

Their last album, 2013's *Last Patrol*, was a meandering 60s garage rock pastiche that frontman Dave Wyndorf attempted to fix with a pointless remix album, *Milking The Stars*. It's didn't help. And then Trump got elected and everything went to hell and was lost forever.

Well, brothers and sisters, I bring good news: *Mindfucker* is MM's first album since *Powertrip* to truly deliver the goods. Revisiting the spacey, grinding proto-metal of their *Spine Of God* days, it trawls through the acid-fried wasteland of the early 70s, delivering fiery dead-ender sermons such as scorching opener *Rocket Freak*, the pulse-pounding *Spacelord* redux *I'm God* and the absolutely ferocious closer *When The Hammer Comes Down*. No tinkering with the formula, just straight-up, blow-the-roof-off rock'n'roll thunder, end to end. Thank Christ.

Sleazegrinder

Sloan

12 YEP ROC

Canadian quartet's latest shimmers, pops and rocks.

There's a much missed bar in Toronto called The Tap where the singer from a great Canadian band called the Pursuit Of Happiness first played me another great Canadian band called Sloan. So revered and loved were they in that town that TPOH singer (and DJ) Moe Berg strung three of their glistening pop songs back to back and the packed bar nodded along appreciatively. The next morning I went out and bought everything I could find by them.

Happily, 10 years later the ever-inventive Sloan (apart, perhaps, from when it comes to titling their twelfth album) are still an exhilarating mix of indie, alt and psych pop; think Posies or Big Star if Big Star could have mustered any kind of longevity. Especially good in songs like the lilting *Right To Roam*, the jangling *Spin Our Wheels* and the Jeff Lynne-like *Essential Services*, *12* is another gem worth unearthing.

Philip Wilding

FM

Atomic Generation FRONTIERS

One of the band's best.

It would be easy for FM to coast, to make an acceptable album with little effort. But while there are others of their vintage who'd do exactly that, FM have risen to the challenge and made one of the best albums of their career.

Moreover, they've done it by pushing themselves on all fronts. When they need a sumptuous approach, then it drips with richly smooth timbre, as on *Golden Days* and *Too Much Of A Good Thing*. When there's a call for a funk rock groove, it's conjured up with *In It For The Money*. And if it's more of a Stevie Wonder vibe that's required, they've got the answer with *Playing Tricks On Me*. *Stronger* has Mk IIDeep Purple written right across its barrel-chested anthemic presentation, while *Follow Your Heart* wouldn't sound out of place on an early Foreigner album.

Everything here has been lovingly crafted for maximum melodic intent. This is a band with a sense of pride.

Malcolm Dome

The Sword

Used Future RAZOR AND TIE

Album six from the singular stoner Texan crew.

You've got to hand it to The Sword. In the 15 years of their existence they've never been swayed by the vagaries of fashion, and have ploughed their own furrow determinedly from their early doom days to the unmistakably Sabbath-influenced stoner rock of today. On *Used Future* they make further explorations into inner and outer space, from the mysticism and psychedelia of *Twilight Sunrise* to the sci-fi adventure of *Book Of Toth*, a master class in creating mood and atmosphere.

MANIC STREET REACHERS: ALEX LAKE/PRESS

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Lyrics seem to be something of an afterthought for much of the album, as they let the music do the talking on the likes of the punchy, anxious *The Wild Sky*. So when they do chose to add bluesy vocals, as on the combative *Don't Get Too Comfortable* or the paranoid, pagan *Deadly Nightshade*, there's an added weight at play. It all gives the impression that The Sword, lost in their own reverie, won't notice whether you listen or not. But you should.

Emma Johnston

Broken Records

What We Might Know

J SHARP

Epic Scots anthemists return with crowd-funded fourth.

When this Edinburgh mob started out they very soon got sick of comparisons to the Arcade Fire, thanks to a sizeable multi-instrument line-up and a penchant for wailingly emotional yet slightly ramshackle anthems, which dominated their first two releases on 4AD.

On this second self-released album they've built a more direct sound. And it instantly grabs you thanks to the captivating Springsteenish urgency of *They Won't Ever Leave Us Alone* and the organ-soaked, horn-boosted blast of *Let The Right One In*. But they can also use their long-established talent for arrangements to stray from that template now and then. The strings and flute decorating *To Be Free*'s lilting lament really bring out the best in Jamie Sutherland's plaintive vocal, while the New Order-style electronic bass line of *Perfect Hollow Love* adds drive to a rabble-rousing stomper that resembles The Waterboys trading hooks with The Killers. It's a sound not so much broken, then, as subtly fixed.

Johnny Sharp

Octopus

Supernatural Alliance

RISE ABOVE

Squid vicious.

Detroit's illustrious rock legacy is in rude health judging from this first album from psychedelic missionaries Octopus.

Formed 10 years ago by former Electric Six guitarist J Frezzato (after dreaming he was navigating post-Armageddon ocean depths in a giant iron octopus) and apocalyptic vocalist Masha Marijeh, the band lash psych's multi-tentacled anything-goes manifesto to the mast with that innate raw power that seems to run in the Motor City's water supply and also infects bassist Matt O'Brien, drummer Chuck Burns and keyboard player Adam Cox, whose other-worldly Mellotron and Hammond tones add more dark dimensions.

Along the way their surging cosmic tidal wave churns up early Purple and Sabbath on *The Unknown* and *Slave And Master* and Atomic Rooster on the gothic *Black Dynamite*, while homeboys the Stooges charge Frezzato's squalling wah-wah on the title track. Add that ever-present rampant energy, and Octopus could soon be causing a shipwreck near you.

Kris Needs

Palace Of The King

Get Right With Your Maker

GOLDEN ROBOT

High-intensity rock'n'roll.

Aussies who clearly know how to bash out a blues-rock-style rhythm, Palace Of The King follow in the well-trodden path of Angel City, Rose Tattoo and Cold Chisel, and this album, their fourth, is full of focused energy.

It begins with the deceptively slow-paced *I Am The Storm*, before *It's Been A Long Time Coming* allows Tim Henwood and Sean Johnston to stretch out on guitar, the former also delivering throaty vocal nuances. This band don't feel the need to play everything right on the limit, so that when they burst into flame, as on *A Dog With A Bone*, then it burns hard.

Get Right With Your Maker has class in its dirty grooves, and showcases a band who are going to be big news soon.

Malcolm Dome

Stevie R Pearce And The Hooligans

Stevie R Pearce And The Hooligans

CARGO

Punk at its most playful.

Stevie R Pearce started his first band, Young Lust, in 2005 and has played guitar for Jizzy Pearl (Jizzy Pearl/Love/Hate) and Kory Clarke (Warrior Soul).

He and his current band The Hooligans' debut is a raucous mishmash of sound, ranging from the Guns N' Roses-gone-punk of opener *Bad Day* to the big, Black Stone Cherry-style blues rock riffs on *Same Old Story*. However, they're rooted in big, boisterous yet lighthearted garage rock anthems and the poppier side of punk; playful punk anthem *Goin' Down* will stay spinning round your head long after it stops, while the upbeat *Set My Soul On Fire* sounds like it could soundtrack a teen high-school comedy from the noughties. There's even a super-speeded-up cover of Johnny Cash's *Folsom Prison Blues*.

This isn't ground-breaking stuff, but it is enthusiastic, entertaining, and would no doubt be bloody good fun live.

Hannah May Kilroy

Feed The Rhino

The Silence

CENTURY MEDIA

Fourth album from perpetually annoyed British bruisers.

Feed The Rhino have got 'miffed' locked down. The Kent band exist in the hinterland between modern metal and hardcore punk, an area not known for its low-key introspection. *The Silence* opens with vocalist Lee Tobin screaming the words '*Mirror, mirror on the fucking wall*,' and things barely ease up for the next 40 minutes.

Ironically, it's when they do actually pause for breath that they're most interesting. The title track echoes with the kind of churning atmosphere that your average 80s goth band would be proud of, while *Losing Ground* is 21st-century metal's equivalent of a power ballad. That those are the album's most memorable moments suggests that the band might at least consider a rethink.

Dave Everley

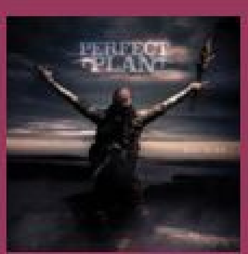
ROUND-UP: MELODIC

By Dave Ling

Perfect Plan: a nigh-on perfect album.

Perfect Plan

All Rise FRONTIERS



Another month, another high-quality Scandinavian melodic rock act from the Frontiers Records assembly line, and this little corker appears right out of the blue. Perfect Plan formed in late 2014, but they've kept their powder dry until now.

All Rise is an exceptional debut. The urgent, modern-sounding keyboards prick up the ears within bars of opening track *Bad City Woman*, but Perfect Plan's show stopper is vocalist Kent Hilli, for whom superstardom would have been nailed on back in AOR's glorious 1980s heyday. Throw in Rolf Nordström, whose tastefully restrained guitar solos have the hallmark of Foreigner's Mick Jones, and the foundations are complete.

What really makes *All Rise* such a success is the songs - from the first single *In And Out Of Love* to *Stone Cold Love*, *What Goes Around* and *Can't Turn Back*, the band carve a cunning niche that lies somewhere between Scandi-AOR's new breed such as Work Of Art, and the old-school greats Giant, Journey, Toto and post-reunion era FM.

All Rise is nigh-on Perfect.

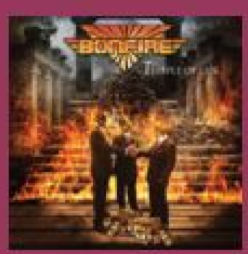
Burn

Ice Age MELODIC ROCK

Ten years on from their previous album, with *Ice Age* Burn's flame is rekindled. I have to admit that this British band have underwhelmed me until now, but the arrival of Steve Newman (Newman, the band) and Chris Green (Tyketto) as writers and players elevates Burn into a different league. This album is quite possibly a little over-long, but touch and you'll feel its flame.

Bonfire

Temple Of Lies AFM



Active since the mid-80s and still featuring co-founding guitarist Hans Ziller, Bonfire have undergone some amazing peaks and troughs during their career. Current frontman Alexx Stahl may perhaps be a little too shrill for some tastes, but *Temple Of Lies*, their fifteenth album, does more than enough to suggest that the enduring German band still have juice in the tank.

Issa

Run With The Pack FRONTIERS

Norwegian ice queen Issa Oversveen sprinkles her records with a dose of pop to keep them fresh, lively and squeaky clean - there's no harm in enchanting occasionally. This tradition continues on *Run With The Pack*, the singer's fifth release, which also sees a sharing of the microphone with former Journey/Bad English drummer Deen Castronovo on *Sacrifice Me*.

James Christian

Craving FRONTIERS

It's pretty terrifying to think that House Of Lords' debut is now 30 years old. James Christian, the band's lead singer, has been making solo records since the mid-90s, so it's no surprise to find that confidence and aptitude ooze from *Craving*, his fourth, co-written with with Tommy Denander, Alessandro Del Vecchio, Clif Magness [sic] and Jimi Bell, among others.

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Led Zeppelin

How The West Was Won *ATLANTIC/SWAN SONG*

The mountains and the canyons started to tremble and shake…

There can't be any doubt that Led Zeppelin were the hottest rock group on the planet when they pummelled the Forum in Los Angeles on June 25, 1972 and destroyed Long Beach Arena two days later. Jimmy Page considered the band were at the height of their powers at the time, following the monumental *IV*. It wasn't a question of how the West was won – America had already fallen – more why they didn't prove it at the time by releasing a live album. Given that the Stones and The Who were happy to show off their abilities on stage with *'Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!'* and *Live At Leeds* respectively, the absence of an official Led Zeppelin live record seemed contrary; after all, the soundboard tapes were in the archive.

That oversight was rectified in 2003 with the release of the three-CD *How The West Was Won*. Now, on the eve of the band's 50th anniversary, Page has overseen a definitive remaster that doesn't mess with the original. He is a stickler for integrity.

Yet the response from the message boards is lukewarm: there are no (legally) previously unavailable tracks from those Californian shows – no *Tangerine*, *Louie Louie* or *Communication Breakdown*. Is that a big deal? Not really. The integrity of the project didn't allow for such tampering, and if those songs had been shoehorned in they'd have disrupted the balance. Probably a case of be thankful for what you got.

Of course it's familiar. The snatch of LA Drone is followed by the three-minute warning of

NEIL ZLOZOWER/PRESS

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Robert Plant's Valhalla screech in *Immigrant Song*, and Page showing off his full range, from madrigal to power chord crunch, on *Heartbreaker*. It's what it is. *Black Dog*'s lascivious blues leer sounds a tad embarrassing at this juncture (it's noticeable that Plant shows no interest at all in his own ancient history), but we can't rewrite his past. Better to bask in the breaks as *Over The Hills And Far Away* transitions from British folk into the furiosity of John Bonham's impersonation of someone detonating a device inside an iron and steel foundry. And what is left to be said about *Stairway To Heaven*, except that it's not even their best song? In terms of modern influence, Led Zeppelin sound more relevant on the Moby Grape-flavoured, mandolin-coloured *Going To California*, or the pastoral *That's The Way* where you can hear Plant's immersion in the work of Tim Buckley. *Bron-Y-Aur Stomp* also retains a rustic mystique that must have seemed exotic to those weaned on *Whole Lotta Love* but now feels bang on-trend thanks to John Paul Jones's double bass expertise (his organ interludes on *Since I've Been Loving You* create similar resonance).

For all their hard rock legend it's diversity that will keep Led Zeppelin's name in lights. Page's funky scratch on *Dazed And Confused* and Bonzo's brutal drum outro still thrill, the psychedelic-metal-prog riffs on *What Is And What Should Never Be* are almost as astounding as Plant's vocal; no wonder he keeps this one close when he plays his solo shows these days.

If that's as good as it gets, obviously there are lesser moments of interest. Bonham's *Moby Dick* drum solo is impressive but is also the cue to join the queue for a toilet break. The *Houses Of The Holy* tracks other than *Over The Hills* are hardly Led Zeppelin at their best. *The Ocean* didn't prove to be anything special, while *Dancing Days* is unforgivably dull. Any more of those clunkers and the West would have been lost. The same goes for the rather dutiful Chicago blues take on Willie Dixon's *Bring It On Home*. Nice to hear Plant's harmonica homage to Sonny Boy Williamson and Page's chugging groove, but this was an encore waiting to be drop-kicked into the past and didn't qualify as a 'leave them wanting more' killer when they had the three-chord trick of *Rock And Roll* in their armoury. Still, at least they kept the good bits for *Black Dog* on their ensuing 1973 US tour.

It's worth remembering that sales of *How The West Was Won* didn't match the glowing reviews it received 15 years ago. Will it fare better as a heritage piece? The calling cards for die-hards are all about the format(s). Take your pick from remastered CDs or four vinyl LPs, or the expected deluxe Blu-ray edition that comes with a memorabilia book and print of the original cover.

'A definitive remaster that doesn't mess with the original.'

One person who won't be listening in is Robert Plant, who recently announced: "I prefer to move forward. It's as simple as that. I don't want to be stuck in the past, like so many of my contemporaries."

Led Zeppelin fanatics may read that muttering: "The royalties come in handy. Go West, young man, and seek your fortune."

Max Bell

Paradise Lost

Host NUCLEAR BLAST

Goth metallers' overlooked synth album gets another push.

After Paradise Lost began their departure from their heavy doom days towards a more gothic sound with sixth album *One Second*, they decided to push the sonic change even further with their next album, *Host*, going full-on synthpop. It was a U-turn that seriously divided their fan base. Even frontman Nick Holmes acknowledges the fact in regard to this reissue, saying it may have been "a leap too far". But he also claims that it's "still one of the band's strongest albums in terms of songwriting, atmosphere and sheer misery".

He isn't wrong. Remastered and available on black, clear and mint vinyl, *Host* may be less heavy than previous and later work by Paradise Lost, but it's drenched in their trademark despair: opener *So Much Is Lost*, with the grim line '*All of my life seems wasted*' immediately sets the tone.

As a reissue, *Host* is given a chance to be seen as a standalone album rather than a career curveball. Musically it's brilliantly atmospheric. Melding electronica, synthpop and dark wave, it has an almost cinematic quality – you could imagine it soundtracking a dark, dystopian 90s movie set in a gloomy goth bunker.

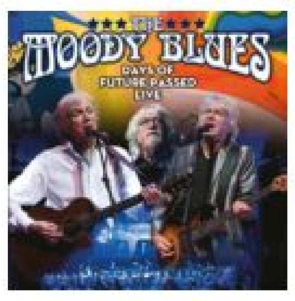
Of course, as with much of this style of music it does sound dated, but this reissue gives this overlooked and underrated album another push to get the recognition it deserves.

Hannah May Kilroy

The Moody Blues

Days Of Future Passed Live EARMUSIC

The best way to celebrate an iconic album.



In 1967, the Moody Blues hoodwinked their label, Decca, and in doing so recorded *Days Of Future Passed*, one of the most important albums of all time. This is where symphonic rock began.

Last year, to mark its 50th anniversary, the band performed the album in its entirety with the Toronto World Festival Orchestra, and it is a beautiful commemoration of timeless musical excellence.

The performance is enthralling, as all musicians meld seamlessly. It helps, of course, that the original album was created with an orchestra in the first place, so there's no need to drastically adapt the arrangements, as is so often the case when rock and classical themes meet.

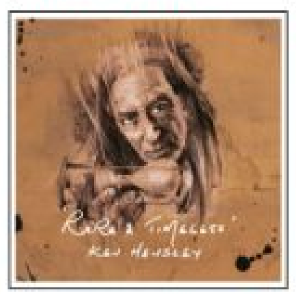
There are a number of formats available. The two-CD, Blu-ray and DVD versions not only have the *Days Of Future Passed* album, but also a set of classic songs the band played on the night in question prior to getting stuck into the centrepiece. There's also a double LP, which has *Questions* and *Ride My See Saw* only as additional tracks. Whichever format you choose, this is a stunning and memorable performance.

Malcolm Dome

Ken Hensley

Rare & Timeless BMG

Abandon Heep all ye who enter here!



Those familiar with Ken Hensley's solo albums will know that they're often more introspective, mellower affairs than the hard rock of his former band Uriah Heep or current amped-up group Live Fire.

Hensley highlights this more reflective side of his musical personality with the 15 tracks (five previously unreleased, two specially recorded) he's personally selected for this lavishly presented solo anthology, although that's not to say there aren't some bombastic moments to be found here too.

It's clearly a labour of love, and Hensley's hand-written sleevenotes give insight into each song. Opening with an alternative take of Heep's *Free Me* featuring an orchestra and heavier guitars, the collection presents a variety of moods, taking in piano ballads, a heftier mid-paced track with trademark slide guitar (*Fortune*), a dramatic but effective reworking of Blackfoot's *Send Me An Angel*, and a Glenn Hughes cameo on showstopper *The Last Dance*. The remix of *Lady In Black* may be viewed as innovation or abomination, depending on taste. Taken as a whole, the album illustrates the impressive breadth of Hensley's range as a songwriter.

Rich Davenport

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Tom Waits

Reissues *ANTI*

The sublime early years of America's greatest barfly.

It's 45 years since Tom Waits released his magnificent debut album *Closing Time* (**8/10**), and, looking back as it – and his following six records – are sensitively remastered and reissued, it becomes apparent that he is, despite outward appearances, ageing backwards. While passing years find him becoming ever more experimental, when he was 24 he was playing the part of an old man beaten up by life, creating soused vignettes of whisky-breathed, rheumy-eyed romance such as *Martha*, the most heartbreaking portrait of missed opportunities and lost love.

He peels himself off the bar stool for *The Heart Of Saturday Night* (**7/10**) to head to an after-hours jazz club, tumbling into a timeless space where the beat poets remain at large and smoking indoors is mandatory, the sense of confessional intimacy closing in like a comfort blanket. *Nighthawks At The Diner* (**8/10**), recorded live in LA in 1975, is the first time the Waits wit is properly given permission to run riot, zingers tripping readily from that bourbon-burned larynx.

By *Small Change* (**9/10**) in 1976, Waits's voice has matured into the singular growl that's so recognisable today. Backed by an orchestra, it's as literary as songwriting gets, one minute hilarious, the next tragic, each track a perfect glimpse from the piano stool into the lives of drunks and deadbeats, shysters and lost souls haunting old LA's seediest strip clubs and gutters.

The more subdued *Foreign Affairs* (**6/10**), with its oddly disjointed Bette Midler duet *I Never Talk To Strangers*, lacks some of the roguish charm of its predecessors, demanding commitment from the listener to unpick his poetry against a starker jazz ensemble, but it's an important signpost towards the weird and wonderful experimentalism to come a few years down the line. *Blue Valentine* (**7/10**) wrong-foots you with a faithful cover of *Somewhere* from *West Side Story* before stripping things back to the raw blues and empathic and uncompromising storytelling of *Christmas Card From A Hooker In Minneapolis*.

Finally, as *Heartattack And Vine* (**7/10**) heralds in the 80s, that magnetic poetry remains in Waits's world, where girls look like Cadillacs and *'there ain't no devil, there's just God when he's drunk'*, but it's the start of a new era, as he tinkers with rhythm, Latin and southern states influences and his own kaleidoscopic thought processes.

Tom Waits is a true one-off, a unique artist and a great American treasure with wit and pathos to spare. This treasure trove from a then-young man with an old soul is never anything short of astonishing and, in many places, absolutely essential.

Emma Johnston

Love

Forever Changes – 50th Anniversary Edition

RHINO

In the court of King Arthur.

Forever Changes has been in Love fans' hearts and minds since whenever, but it's a shame that by the time Arthur Lee's 1967 masterpiece earned its dues he'd died. Although sales at the time of its release were sluggish, plaudits flooded in over the years and this album refuses to go quietly.

Is *Forever Changes* the greatest record ever made? Dunno, but it certainly justifies this new edition: a four-CD overview that remasters the original album in stereo and mono and adds the real must-hear alternative mixes and demo/out-take gems that round off Lee's bird's-eye view of being a black man in a white man's world.

His genius was to subvert that idea. On *You Set The Scene* he turned grumble into full-blown rumble with a rap so ahead of its time that Elektra Records felt forced to cut him. Here it's restored, re-establishing Lee as a figure with every right to be cited alongside Jimi Hendrix. His knowledge of melody and arrangement is nailed inside *A House Is Not A Motel*, but his belligerence as a bandleader à la the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson is less familiar. That is until you hear him thrashing the troops into submission on the out-take *Your Mind And We Belong Together*.

Love fans who think they've heard it all before may demur, but they haven't. The clarity of a rolling *Bummer In The Summer* invites submersion into a world all his own. Not The Byrds nor Doors, Arthur Lee ruled this roost.

Max Bell

Wishbone Ash

Twin Barrels Burning / Raw To The Bone *LEMON*

Heavy Ash, if not classic.

For a brief period in the early 80s, Wishbone Ash seem to be under the indirect influence of NWOBHM. And this resulted in two albums, which had contrasting fortunes.

In 1982, *Twin Barrels Burning* (**7/10**) came storming out, brimming with power and no little energy. It appeared that the band had decided to go for a more stripped-back sound to get them out of a comparative rut. And it worked, with songs like *Streets Of Shame* and *Engine Overheat* proving Wishbone were far from being the spent force many had claimed.

However, when they followed that up three years later with *Raw To The Bone* (**5/10**), somehow it was as if they were trying to misguidedly recreate the formula that had brought them success with *Twin Barrels*. It all sounded forced and a little cheap, as was reflected by the low-rent cover. It's not that the band were bereft of ideas – *People In Motion* and *Don't You Mess* attest to the fact they could still write decent tunes – more that they seemed to lack the desired studio-focus. Definitely a missed opportunity.

Malcolm Dome

Holger Czukay

Cinema *GRÖNLAND*

Anthology of recently deceased Can bassist's solo work.

It's sad to think of the difficulties suffered by Holger Czukay in his final years before his death last year – the death of his long-time partner U-She, problems in getting his work reissued. His legacy with Can apart, here was a man who built ingenious bridges between pop and the postwar avant garde, always with a determined twinkle in his eye, always with a joyful, anarchic sense of seriousness.

This collection is by no means comprehensive but it includes the bulk of his 1980s solo work, his 1969 collaborations with Rolf Dammers as Canaxis and intriguing, unreleased fragments including a 1960 outing, *Konfiguration*, in his early jazz guise as leader of the Holger Schüring Quintet and a 2008 late 'collaboration' built around a recording of the voice of his mentor Karlheinz Stockhausen. Both of these pieces indicate the singularly vast musical journey Czukay took over 60 or so years.

1980's *Movies* was ground-breaking in its inventive use of tape collage, short-wave radio recordings brilliantly spiced to make miniature masterpieces like *How Much Are They?* and *Persian Love*. He went on to make a series of albums, often featuring post-punk collaborators

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including Jah Wobble for whom Can had been an inspiration, including *Der Ost Is Rot* (1984) and *Rome Remains Rome* (1987).

Although his French horn resounds like a signature motif throughout his work, Czukay's genius was as a discreet creator of space, in which ideas, energies, colours and found sounds could flow freely.

David Stubbs

Rezillos

Flying Saucer Attack: Complete Recordings 1977-79 CHERRY RED

Sixties-informed punk-poppers précised.

Despite neither claiming nor aspiring to actually be a punk band, The Rezillos turned out to be one of the genre's finest exponents at the very epicentre of what latterly proved to be its golden era. From humble beginnings as a 60s covers band, the Knutsford Dominators, formed by Jo Callis and Alan Forbes while students at Edinburgh College of Art in '75, the renamed and repurposed Rezillos honed, contrived and quickened to such an irresistible extent that they were duly snapped up by Seymour Stein's Sire Records imprint.

With a double-barreled vocal front line (Forbes – now answering to Eugene Reynolds – and Faye Fife, a moniker given to the proudly Dunfermiline-accented fireball that was Sheilagh Hynd because she was, literally, 'fae Fife'), the tightly drilled Rezillos were an unassailable live force. So much so that when the Ramones recorded *It's Alive* they brought in Generation X as a buffer between themselves and The Rezillos, whose support slots had been threatening to upstage the decidedly in-form Bruddas on earlier dates in the tour.

Their apolitical go-go-boot exuberance transferred seamlessly to the studio and their debut *Can't Stand The Rezillos* (their sole album release and this not-quite-complete-for-lack-of-Peel-sessions collection's main source) retains its effusive charm. William Mysterious's strident bass work characterises its brightness, while camp B-52s sci-fi (*Flying Saucer Attack, 2000AD*) and all-round kookiness (*I Can't Stand My Baby* and *(My Baby Does) Good Sculptures*) its sheer likability.

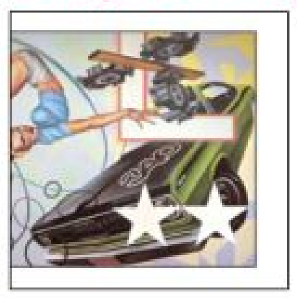
With an expanded version of posthumous live set *Mission Accomplished* and singles to please the collector, here's an all-too-brief career encapsulated. Of course, Jo Callis went on to reinvent the future with the Human League Mk.II, but that's another unlikely story.

Ian Fortnam

The Cars

Reissues RHINO

They were in a rut, and then along came 'Mutt'.



The Cars' fourth album, released in 1981, was called *Shake It Up*. Three years later they did precisely that with the follow-up, *Heartbeat City*. For one of the smartest rock'n'roll groups that ever came out of America, it was a brilliant reinvention, achieved by exchanging one legendary producer for another.

In these two albums, each now repackaged as Expanded Editions, the contrast is stark. *Shake It Up* (**5/10**) is the sound of The Cars running out of gas. Back in 1978, their self-titled debut album yielded a defining new-wave hit in *My Best Friend's Girl*. But by 1981, new wave was old news. And on *Shake It Up* the songs were formulaic, as was the production by Roy Thomas Baker, who had worked with The Cars since their debut.

Cue the arrival of 'Mutt' Lange, producer of mega-hit albums by AC/DC, Foreigner and Def Leppard, whose genius elevated *Heartbeat City* (**9/10**) into a flawless hybrid of art-rock, power-pop and AOR. While singer Ric Ocasek's eccentricities still dominated, it was the beautifully crafted ballad *Drive* – sung by bassist Benjamin Orr – that became a classic. However, among the bonus tracks, a bossa nova-feel demo of *Drive* is best avoided.

Paul Elliott

The Darkside

Complete Studio Masters

BEGGARS BANQUET

A cosmic trip with the other Spacemen.

While Sonic Boom and Jason Pierce battled for the heart of cosmic explorers Spacemen 3 before finally ripping it asunder, former members Pete 'Bassman' Bains and Sterling Roswell struck out in 1989 for the outer limits on their own trip in the shape of The Darkside.

With their former co-pilots moving to opposite ends of the psychedelic scale with the stark minimalism of Spectrum, and the epically orchestral grandeur of Spiritualized, The Darkside positioned themselves in the space in the middle.

Their two albums *All That Noise* (1990) and *Melomania* (1992) and sundry EPs and singles revealed a band in thrall to subverting the more melodic end of rock music via an acid-fried approach that favoured the groove as much as it did hooks. To listen back to their debut album is to be reacquainted with a band that shared an aesthetic with Echo And The Bunnymen's early records. As evidenced by the fuzz of *Tornado* and the methodical wig-out of *Rise* on *Melomania*, The Darkside also had their thing going on.

The demos and alt mixes prove a worthy listen, while the singles and EPs maintain the high standard throughout.

Julian Marszalek

Anthrax

We've Come For You All / The Greater Of Two Evils NUCLEAR BLAST

Bush and Caggiano-era Anthrax showcase what the band could have been.

Altough Anthrax might have fallen out of favour after their salad days of the late 80s, it didn't once dent Scott Ian and Charlie Benante's musical invention or drive. It's a shame too that their fans never really took to John Bush as the band's singer in the way they once embraced Joey Belladonna. That, though, is a whole other soap opera. As was the surprise departure of guitarist Rob Caggiano for Volbeat. Anthrax, though, endure.

It's curious and maddening that *We've Come For You All* and *The Greater Of Two Evils* didn't kick start Act Two of Anthrax's career. The latter (released in 2004) was a showcase compilation that made it very clear that Bush could sing any song that Anthrax's original catalogue might throw at him. It was the sound of a band telegraphing the fact that Bush was (still) the new guy doing the old stuff. Fans might have voted for the tracks that finally appeared on the compilation, but Bush made it all his own. From *Deathrider* (from their *Fistful Of Metal* debut) to the breakthrough hit *Madhouse* and the career-defining *Among The Living*, Bush was very much sounding like he could be all things to all men.

Anthrax's previous record, the poorly received *Volume 8: The Threat Is Real*, in 1998, turned out to be something of a transitional album (even if that transition had taken five years), because *We've Come For You All* was lightning in a bottle. What made it even more remarkable was that a lot of their audience and critics had written them off. People talked about Anthrax in the past tense until *WCFYA* brought everyone back up to speed.

Bush and Caggiano (who helped produce) added real lustre and muscle to the band's material, including the haunting *Safe Home*, the rattling *Cadillac Rock Box* and *Strap It On* (both featuring guitarist Dimebag Darrell) and the furious *Black Dahlia*, and they even managed to get The Who's Roger Daltrey to add vocals on *Taking The Music Back*.

Drummer Charlie Benante said it was an album that explored other territories. And they've kept on exploring; you can see the path that lead from this record to modern-day Anthrax. The one caveat is that, regretfully, it would be John Bush's last album with the band.

Philip Wilding

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Thee Hypnotics

Righteously Recharged BEGGARS ARKIVE

Have a bang on this… Rock, rolled to perfection, and now recharged.

There's no more bizarre temporal anomaly than when a band arrives both 20 years too late and 20 years too early, as their entire potential audience remain fixated on a contemporary music scene that offers no alternative artist worthy of touching the hem of said band's flared leather garment.

And so it was with Thee Hypnotics. Straight out of High Wycombe, they were infused with a visceral, intuitive, freewheeling, salacious raw power more readily associated with the Stooges, MC5 and the Jimi Hendrix Experience. A living, breathing embodiment of a vintage rock band, exactly as such (seemingly extinct) creatures had originally emerged from the primordial, countercultural soup in '68, inexplicably manifested in the late 80s – a dark age, blighted by emasculated production, indie jangling, keyboard riffs and orchestral swoops.

Yet while Thee Hypnotics were redefining a lost past within an even more lost present, everyone's attentions were elsewhere: wearing raincoats in the grey drizzle of a Bunnymen gig or vainly trying to locate the sound of an actual guitar outside the solos of a Van Halen record.

So what were the planet's ill-served rock community missing while Thee Hypnotics vocalist Jim Jones was walking on the hands of a snug Marquee audience? Most of the quartet's recorded legacy is located here across four discs, though sadly not their landmark *Live'r Than God* audio-vérité EP from 1989. That said, there's this thing called the internet now, so you can hunt it down later if your taste is as whetted as it ought to be by the delights contained herein.

And what delights. There's the titanic, acid-fuelled, testicular magnitude of *Come Down Heavy* (disc one, 1990); the dark, opiated, horned-up and lascivious, Vegas-via-Hades bump'n'grind psychodrama of *Soul, Glitter & Sin* (disc two, 1991); the essential, if hitherto barely released, Chris Robinson-produced, riff-spitting, coke blizzard of *The Very Crystal Speed Machine* (disc three, '93); and disc four's tasty grab-bag of Peel sessions, demos, singles (*All Night Long*'s debut clarion to oblivion) and etceteras.

Battered by the almost inevitable spectres of addiction, death and disaster (essential byproducts of doing the job properly), Thee Hypnotics split as the 90s choked their last on fly-blown union flags and emergent EDM. Now buoyed by Jim Jones' subsequent solo infamy and an imminent live reunion, they're back, so load up on this exceptional set and right those past wrongs.

Ian Fortnam

Richie Kotzen

Telecasters And Stratocasters: Klassic Kotzen STORE FOR MUSIC

Lots of Kotzen.

Richie Kotzen has racked up over 20 genre-straddling solo albums since beginning his career as a Shrapnel Records shredder in 1989 (in addition to releases with the Winery Dogs, Mr Big and Poison), and this set scores by gathering three records of a similar stripe, all centred around an uplifting blend of rock, funk and old-school R&B.

The combined effect is to portray Kotzen as a song-focused artist, tailoring his guitar playing and soulful vocals to suit the mood. Subtle traces of the Stones, Coverdale/Hughes-era Purple and Jimi Hendrix are discernible, but Kotzen distils these into a sound all his own, using the tones and tools (hence this set's title, named for Richie's guitars of choice) of a classic era in a latter-day setting.

Something To Say (1997, **8/10**) kicks off with a raunchy one-two combination via *Something To Say* and *What Makes A Man*, strong hooklines emphasised with passionate vocal delivery. The remainder of the album offers hazy ballads (*Let Me In*) and darker moods (*Holy Man*) among its diverse delights.

What Is (1998, **8/10**) is again varied in scope, highlights including the face-slapping riffage of *Open Your Eyes*, and a cameo from Mr Big bandmates Billy Sheehan and Pat Torpey (RIP), holding down an insistent groove under *Locked Out*'s cascading licks and king-size chorus.

Break It All Down (1999, **7/10**) is a more mellow affair, the laid-back funk sweetened with gospel-style harmonies in places (*I Would*), making for an absorbing late-night listen.

Rich Davenport

Kreator

Reissues BMG

Kreative differences.

There are rich pickings here for thrashers of a certain age, with four more expanded Kreator remasters. They cover the band's 90s output, a decade that began with business as usual, before the genre's declining popularity prompted stylistic experiments. *Coma Of Souls* (1990, **8/10**), augmented here with a high-quality live set, consolidated all they did best. Their vicious, technical riffing is enhanced with a greater degree of melody (*World Beyond*) and the skilled solos of new boy Frank Blackfire (ex-Sodom, a transfer equivalent to Metallica's Kirk Hammett joining Slayer in Teutonic thrash terms). The breakneck pace is balanced with dynamic tempo shifts. Matching their musical development with more mature lyrical matter (environmental issues, materialism), they'd come a long way from debut *Endless Pain* in five short years.

They weren't kidding with the title of *Renewal* (1992, **6/10**). It introduced industrial drum loops and slightly monotonous, barked hardcore vocals. The band backed off with regards to the pace and complexity of the music, which was now more bludgeon than incision, *Brainseed* and *Zero To None* mixing old and new most efficiently.

Cause For Conflict (1995, **8/10**) found new drummer Joe Cangelosi (ex-Whiplash) driving the band at warp speed (see *Dogmatic*) through a gloriously extreme *Reign In Blood*-style thrashfest. Mille Petrozza's vocals and the production sound fuller than they did in the 80s on what's one of their best albums.

In contrast, *Outcast*'s (1997, **7/10**) strong material (with an uncharacteristic lack of guitar solos) is mid-paced and occasionally doomy, Petrozza sounding customarily harsh yet perversely tuneful over killer riffs (*Black Sunrise*). The returning industrial elements are far better integrated here.

Rich Davenport

Julian Cope

Reissues UNIVERSAL

A key quartet from the modern antiquarian.

As transitions go, Julian Cope's evolution during his Island tenure was particularly pronounced, as these four reissues attest. Literally emerging from under his shell after 1984's *Fried*, the metamorphosis from clean-cut pop dude to eco-woke Archdrude saw him produce the best material of his career.

Though echoes of the Teardrop Explodes were never too far from the surface, 1987's *Saint Julian* (**9/10**) hammered the psychedelia into compact shiny

THEE HYPNOTICS: GETTY

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pop nuggets: *Trampolene*, *Eve's Volcano* and 'loser's anthem' *World Shut Your Mouth* are all masters of the form.

The follow-up, *My Nation Underground* (**7/10**), was a spikier proposition, the high points of *Charlotte Anne* and *China Doll* tempered by an overall paucity of vision and coherence.

These aspects would be fully addressed on 1991's *Peggy Suicide* (**9/10**), which is core Cope at his most sparkling. Fully fired up after the Anti-Poll Tax march (accompanied by his seven-foot-tall alter ego Sqwubbsy), and still grieving the death of his friend Pete de Freitas, Cope's examination of mortality, human and planetary, gave rise to a sprawling two-disc mood palette of previously unrevealed breadth.

Successful sojourns into funk, garage, audio collage and crafted rock are threaded through with an ever-present pop nous, which is perfectly weighted in running order and tone. Less a concept album than a melancholic vision, it remains his peak.

Continuing the trajectory with added Krautrock and antiquarianism, *Jehovakill* (**8/10**) doesn't quite hang together as convincingly as its forebear, though it's a close call. Island records disagreed: Cope was dropped a mere week after the album's release.

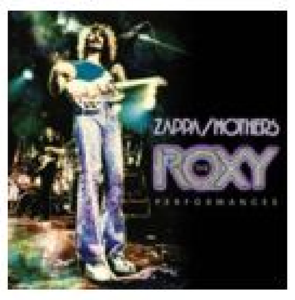
Tim Batcup

Zappa/Mothers

The Roxy Performances

UMC

Seven live discs of warts-n'-all Zappa and the Mothers.



We fans need saving from ourselves. We neither know when enough's enough, nor when to stop collecting. We'll consume the music of our chosen quarry as if in the grip of some grave strain of auditory bulimia. It's not healthy.

Previously, when formats were physical, resources limited and teenage pockets shallow, the industry would edit and we'd be spared studio sweepings. Hell, we wouldn't even know they existed – a state of affairs that was to the benefit of both aficionados and artists. Keen bootleg hunters could always sniff out odd discs of trophy superfluity, but illegality and scarcity of supply saved fanatics' (specifically Zappaphiles') ears, shelves, marriages, sanity and bank balances.

Now, of course, it's like the Wild West out there. A combination of middle-aged consumer affluence and digital formats realising the economic nirvana of being able to sell an awful lot of nothing for a great deal of something means that everything's for sale, at a price. So instead of subsisting on the cherry-picked 66-minute/four vinyl sides/single CD of the pre-existing *Roxy & Elsewhere* (still readily available for under a tenner), you can bloat out on the 84-song/seven-CD (or gigabyte-plus of disc space) eight hours of *The Roxy Performances* for around 60 quid.

These '73 shows (recorded over three nights in LA) are historically excellent, Zappa at his *Apostrophe!*-era peak, but sheer bulk (including a total of 25 minutes of pre-show tuning) drags down the mean quality. Hard-core Zappa fans can only be satisfied by the degree to which obsessive compulsive completists are catered for. However, as with Zappa's recent *Halloween '77* collection, *The Roxy Performances*, with its rehearsals, sound-checks, multiple *Uncle Meats* and 40 minutes of *Be-Bop Tangos*, occasionally feels like way too much of a good thing.

Ian Fortnam

Suede

Suede NUDE

Britpop's big bang.

How do you spot the band set to dictate a decade? You'll know it when you see it. In 1992, into a world of Chapterhouses, Kingmakers and Mega City Fours, landed Suede, the antidote to grunge we never knew we needed. Androgynous, suavely seedy and indebted to such classic British fop-poppers as Bowie, Morrissey and Jagger, they dug glory and glamour from the filth of the century's end, romance from the low-rent, pride from the socially and narcotically ruined.

Their debut single *The Drowners* was a stunning slab of glam savagery, and the Mercury-winning debut album lived up to all its promise and hype. Next stop, Britpop.

A quarter of an (even worse) century on, *Suede* hasn't aged a jot. *So Young* remains indie rock's greatest roar of drug-ravaged exuberance, with *Animal Nitrate* and *Metal Mickey* the sleazy catwalk shimmies to end them all. Bernard Butler's atmospheric guitar webs hoist *She's Not Dead*, *Breakdown* and *Pantomime Horse* into the realm of the timeless, while Brett Anderson wails like a poet swinging from his turret's flagpole in a storm.

As *Sleeping Pills* reaches its monumental climax, like the showstopper at the end of *Valium Overdose: The Musical*, and *The Next Life* bristles with restrained orchestral bombast, the real wonder is that so few acts since have set themselves such an ambitious bar, then so casually surpassed it.

Or produced such a glut of juvenilia genius. Most reissue bonus discs are superfluous; some here are essential. B-sides such as celestial road accident anthem *To The Birds*, nocturnal jazz bar ballad *The Big Time* and *My Insatiable One* make CD2 a great lost album in its own right.

As a package, it's both a boast and a challenge to today's formulaic, chart-chasing Bastilles: this sort of legendary is unmistakable. Aim higher.

Mark Beaumont

Marillion

Brave PARLOPHONE

The acclaimed, if unexpected, concept album that put Marillion at odds with EMI.

MARILLION: GEORGECHIN/ICONICPIX

Marillion had flown high and fallen hard in a cloud of acrimony with their former singer, Fish, with the kind of infighting that makes the UKIP leadership battle look sedate in comparison. Exit the lanky Scotsman; enter the floppy-haired former Europeans keyboard player, Steve Hogarth.

It's hard to imagine now, but back then Marillion were something of a chart hits powerhouse with a major conglomerate label on their backs. Cue two hard pop, if sometimes indeterminate, albums (*Seasons End*, *Holidays In Eden*) and then a record that would help determine the truly experimental (business models, musically, as performers) band that they'd go on to become.

Inspired by a radio report that Hogarth had come across of a mute girl found lost on the Severn Bridge, it was to be a starting point for a record that pored over the idea of what might have led her here to this place. One imprint (included here on the Blu-ray disc) even offered the listener the option of watching her fall from the span of the bridge to a watery grave below.

However you looked at it, it was a long way from the pop notes of *No One Can*.

Brave went over budget and over schedule, from the French countryside to the streets of Liverpool in its long gestation. It drove their then A&R man to distraction. But was it worth it? Absolutely.

It might meander at points and not all the components are absolutely crucial to the story (Mark Kelly: "*Hollow Man* didn't completely fit in, if I'm honest"), but it gave them the impetus and a much-needed focal point that was as expansive as it was imaginative.

Which, perhaps, is why time has been so kind to songs like the staggering *The Great Escape*, *Hard As Love* and *Alone Again In the Lap Of Luxury*. The Steven Wilson remix is as hard and burnished as a pebble, there's a making-of documentary, plus some promo films culled from the original long-form film that accompanied the album that are best forgotten. The extra excellent live discs from 1994, which were remixed this year, are the work of a band stepping out into the unknown, making the choice to head one way or stay with what you know, determining to be brave.

Philip Wilding

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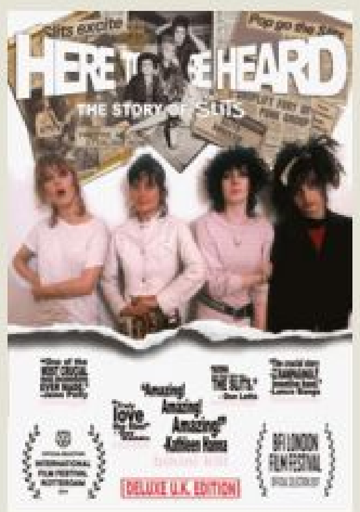
THE HARD STUFF

STUFF

BOOKS & DVDs

Here To Be Heard: The Story Of The Slits



Directed by William E Badgley PLEDGE MUSIC

Documentary portrait of punk's second-most influential band.

It's hard for those who didn't actually witness The Slits' arrival into the male-dominated conservatism of late-70s rock – or more specifically, the fractionally more liberated and inclusive punk scene – to understand how much of an impact they made. Just three weeks after guitarist Viv Albertine arrived to complete their classic line-up, they set out as the most impactful of the supporting cast on The Clash's *White Riot* tour and changed history.

The Clash, despite claims to the contrary, only mirrored the Rolling Stones they sought to replace: shorter of hair, tighter of trouser, but still macho louts dangling provocative cigs with phallic guitars ahoy.

The Slits, meanwhile, were something else: an undeniable force, kicking down doors and, quite literally, against the pricks. Suburban show attendees recently fed the cynically marketed 'jailbait' of Kim Fowley's Runaways expected more of the same from an all-girl punk group: nothing more seditious than safety pins on suspenders. But when The Slits hit the stage, their raw power was as shocking as any first glimpse of the Pistols.

In 1977, rock was a boy's club. No one said so, but everyone knew – except for The Slits. Ari Up was all four St Trinian's films poured into a pair of Silver Jubilee knickers. Energy incarnate, uninhibited and, at 15, terrifyingly young.

After their brash and belligerent set, she strode through the audience, pink plastic comb jabbed into her rat's maze of hair, gaping her flasher's mac at neophyte punk boys who'd literally never seen such behaviour, on their turf, and were fearfully intimidated.

Here was the true front line of punk, a starkly premonitory long view of the shape of things to come, the first spark of the grrrl power revolution.

Aside from storming gender barricades, The Slits went on to fearlessly abandon punk and record *Cut*, the best, most effortlessly authentic white reggae album of all time; they added the spice of world music to post-punk with *Return Of The Giant Slits*; and then they disappeared into legend.

Here To Be Heard is a concise chronicle of their often overlooked, sadly footage-lite HERstory, told by those that were there (ex-bassist Tessa Pollitt, poring over her scrapbooks, is our prime narrator) and it's only ever utterly brilliant.

Ian Fortnam

Thunder

Stage EARMUSIC

Multi-format audiovisual live extravaganza.

Recorded at the Cardiff Motorpoint Arena in March 2017, *Stage* distils the unpretentious everyman appeal of Thunder, as the band dish out a few top cuts from last year's *Rip It Up* and tear through some old favourites.

Often the visual aspect of live packages pales next to the energy of the audio. Not so here, as some intelligent editing, artful framing and lavish multiple camera angles afford some extra style and panache to Morley, Bowes and co. in full flight before a crowd of the faithful.

Indeed, the expansive scale of the visuals effortlessly complements the epic intensity of the band's performance – there's shape throwing aplenty during *No One Gets Out Alive* and *The Enemy Inside*, while old faves like *Higher Ground, Love Walked In* and especially a monumentally majestic *Don't Wait For Me* find Morley on incandescent form. Surely the next best thing to being there.

Essi Berelian

Inside Metal: The Rise Of LA Thrash Metal

Bob Nalbandian METALROCK FILMS

Thrash history rewritten.

Californian writer-director Bob Nalbandian's already definitive *Inside Metal* series follows *Pioneers Of LA Hard Rock (LA 1975-81)* and *LA Metal Scene Explodes (1982-86)* with what happened when the scene hit a fork in the road in the mid-80s. One way pranced to hair metal, the other corralled a fearsome counter rebellion hell-bent on being faster and heavier than anything before.

Although saving on licensing costs by commissioning his own weighty soundtrack, Nalbandian presents a fascinating account of this punk-metal crossover spearheaded by Metallica, Slayer, Dark Angel and Megadeth.

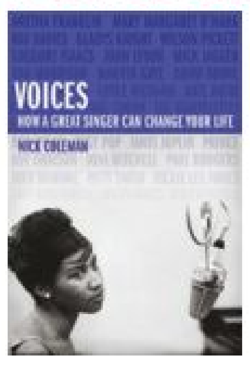
Nalbandian repositions the movement's origins from San Francisco to LA, with a procession of key players to back him up, including Lars Ulrich, Dave Lombardo, Dark Angel's Gene Hoglan, Suicidal Tendencies' Rocky George, *Classic Rock*'s Malcolm Dome and former Megadeth bassist Dave Elefson narrating. And this is only part one.

Kris Needs

Voices: How A Great Singer Can Change Your Life

Nick Coleman JONATHAN CAPE

Profound probe into why vocalists leave us sold or cold.



Not just a gallery of pen portraits of his favourite singers but an impassioned examination of why certain voices 'speak' to us subjectively more than others, Coleman's book travels forward from 2012's *A Train In The Night*. In that book, he documented his encroaching partial deafness. As the illness receded to a degree, he was able to hear again the music that meant worlds to him with refreshed intensity. That comes across here, in prose that's elegant and perceptive.

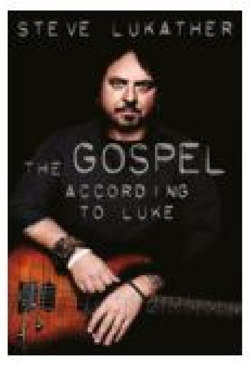
Autobiographical and opinionated like the best music criticism of yore, this tangentially covers the history of popular music: Orbison, Lennon, Bowie, Plant and Dylan are probed, as are less obvious inclusions, from Mary Margaret O'Hara and Donald Fagen to Gladys Knight and Suzi Quatro. He's enjoyably sniffy about Jagger; insightful on Joni. You'll even learn about the practical role played by laryngeal folds and sinuses, but mostly *Voices* believes in magic.

Chris Roberts

The Gospel According To Luke

Steve Lukather CONSTABLE

The Wrecking Crew: Part Two.



Even Steve Lukather is surprised that the guy playing the guitar solo on Boz Scaggs's *Breakdown Dead Ahead* is the same guy playing the guitar solo on Olivia Newton-John's *Physical* – him. As a top session musician during the 70s and 80s, he also played on just about every hit record that came out of LA in that time. And that's before you get to the hits he accumulated as a member of Toto.

He's still bitter at the harsh treatment Toto got from rock critics, without understanding that a carefully calculating band of session musicians was never

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going to be their idea of great rock'n'roll. Just keep banking the royalty checks, Steve.

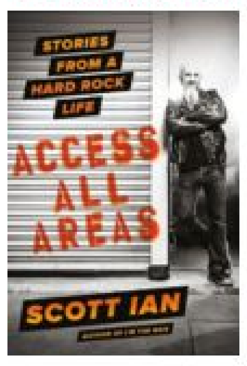
He should be better off than most rock 'heroes' but it sounds like the decadent lifestyle cost more than he envisaged. Still, he's got more than enough memories to see him through.

Hugh Fielder

Access All Areas: Stories From A Hard Rock Life

Scott Ian DA CAPO PRESS

Anthrax man's dispatches.



Accompanying Madonna to a strip club, admiring Lemmy's cut-off denim shorts, and punching Michael Stipe – it's all meat and potatoes in the life of a rock star, according to the driving force behind Anthrax. In truth, Scott Ian writes very little about the day-to-day workings of the band with which he made his name, focusing more on the wider world of celebdom.

Ian relays everything in a no-nonsense style, rarely expressing huge surprise at the outlandish scenarios he becomes part of, and it's this matter-of-fact detachment that distinguishes his skills as a storyteller. His refusal to get bogged down in the tedium of life as a touring musician makes the book a delightful page-turner as it flits from eye-opening ridiculousness to unabashed hero worship in the space of one or two paragraphs.

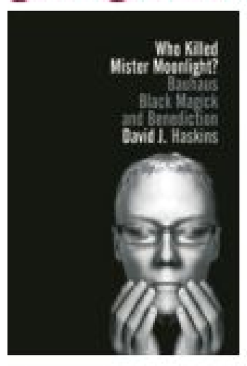
Rarely has a fanboy chronicle been so populated with A-list names, or been so rich in laugh-out-loud situations.

Terry Staunton

Who Killed Mister Moonlight? Bauhaus, Black Magick And Benediction

David J Haskins JAWBONE PRESS

The inside story of the goth godheads.



Bauhaus bassist David J Haskins has managed something rare in the world of rock biographies, in that he's written his story with absolutely no sense of bitterness or score settling. Instead, we get a generous, honest, witty, warm-hearted and beautifully written insider view of the birth of the goth movement and life on the road with Bauhaus, one of the scene's most treasured bands, from the pubs of Northampton to wild nights in New York.

Best of all, while it paints them as artistically ambitious, intense young men, it also allows for the fact that they were still a bunch of daft young lads in a band, bombing up and down the motorway in an old hearse they adopted as a tour bus.

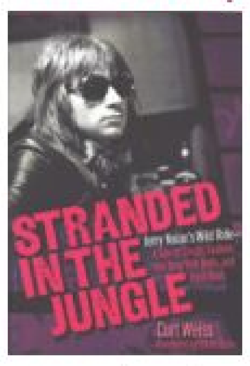
Intertwined with rock'n'roll anecdotes, Haskins lays bare his experiences with the occult and juju, this glimpse of the esoteric transcending earthly pleasures and taking us into more magical realms. Well worth a candlelit read.

Emma Johnston

Stranded In The Jungle: Jerry Nolan's Wild Ride

Curt Weiss BACKBEAT

Tragic tale of punk rock's old-school powerhouse.



Even London's fearless Class Of '76 held Jerry Nolan in nervous awe when Johnny Thunders & The Heartbreakers arrived to join the doomed Anarchy tour. While Thunders wore lippy junkie attitude on his blood-stained sleeve, Nolan exuded cool New York danger in sharp suits as he drove the band with stick-twirling showmanship.

As his first detailed biography (the rest of its lengthy subtitle being *A Tale Of Drugs, Fashion, The New York Dolls And Punk Rock*) attests, Nolan was also a racist, homophobic junkie who stole from girlfriends and sold his famous pink drum kit to feed the habit that started in 1974 and continued until his Aids-related death in 1992. After quitting the Heartbreakers because of disagreements over the mix of *L.A.M.F.*, Nolan kept up wisecracking appearances on demeaning drug gigs, decimating his supernatural chops with methadone.

Weiss nails Nolan's ruthless selfishness, cool front and self-destroyed supernova talent with fresh perspectives. He covers Nolan's tough Brooklyn upbringing through to the later drug gigs, all bolstered by drum technique breakdowns and interviews with bandmates, lovers and colleagues.

Kris Needs

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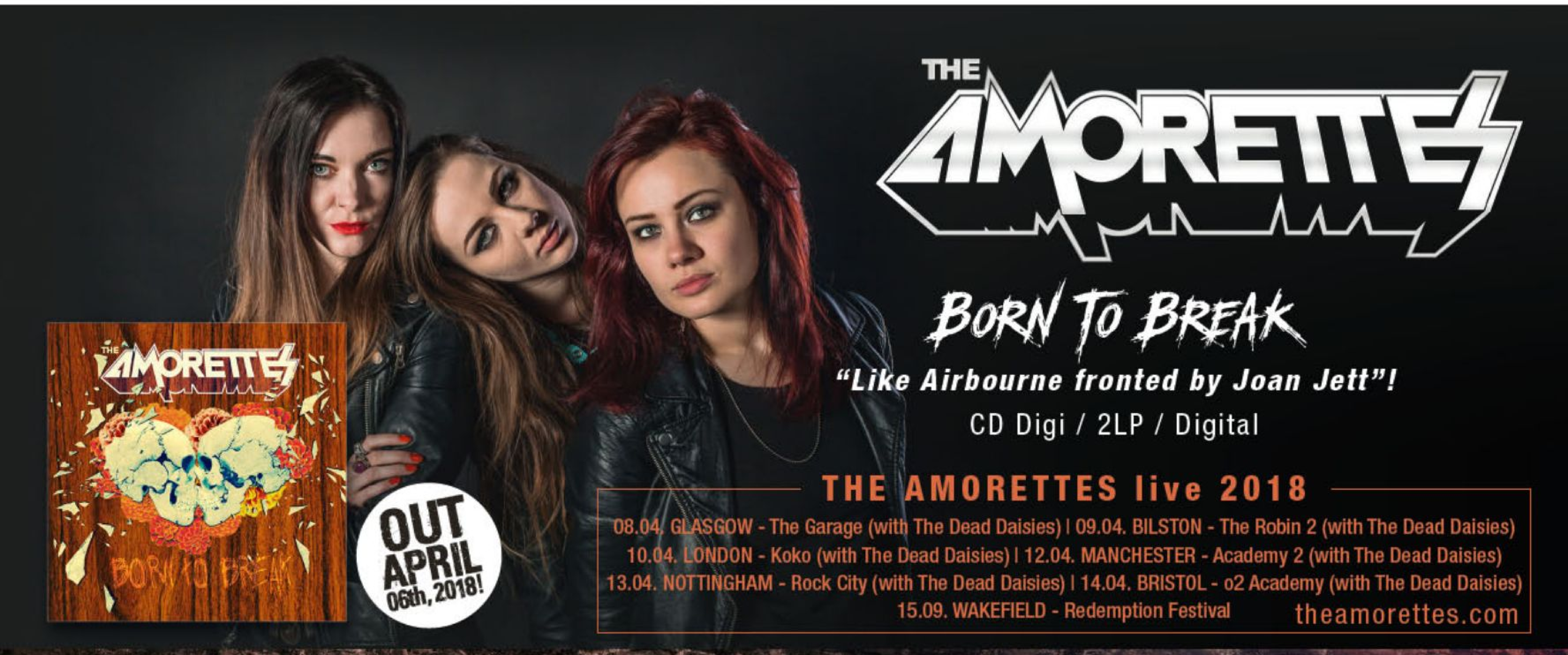

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LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

KEVIN NIXON

P118

Diamond Head

Their best line-up in decades play songs from their golden period.

P106 Interviews
P111 Tour Dates
P114 Live Reviews

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> "Some people treat you great, and others like something they've wiped off their shoe. We remember both of those experiences."

Nickelback

The mega-selling 'Marmite' band and their support Seether play UK shows in May.

With worldwide record sales of more than 50 million, Nickelback are among the world's most successful groups. They are also one of the most divisive. Their outspoken frontman Chad Kroeger, who once threatened a journalist to a boxing contest, no longer gives interviews, so bass-playing sibling Mike sets the scene for the band's upcoming arena tour.

This tour visits seven of the biggest arenas in the UK. When you're playing in such huge venues can the flavour of each nation become a bit lost? Or do British audiences have a particular flavour?
Your audiences are special, but Nickelback audiences are special wherever they may be. We've been to Birmingham, Manchester and London so many times that the entire world has almost become a home-town show.

Nickelback have developed a reputation for taking deserving support acts on tour. Last time it was Monster Truck, this time it's Seether.
Well, we like to take artists that we like, and when possible that we're friends with. Seether are a band that everybody should know about.

Does that attitude derive from Nickelback having been shat on by headline bands?
That's right [laughs]. Some people treat you great, and others like something they've wiped off their shoe. We still remember both of those experiences, and because of that we look after supports the way that they deserve.

***Feed The Machine*, Nickelback's ninth album, released last summer, saw a heavying-up of the band's sound up once again. Were you happy with the response it got?**
Yeah. While making it we kept the focus on being a hard rock band and not worrying too much about the pop world. The goal was to make a great rock record, and for the most part I think we got there. To get the seal of approval from the fans was very satisfying. The only time we strayed from our rock roots there was a real outcry, and rightly so.

You're referring there to the previous album, 2014's *No Fixed Address*?
Yeah. That was the most recent example of that. I guess we pushed the envelope just a little bit too far with a couple of its songs.

How fair do you think the reviews were for that record, one of which was two-out-of-five in *Rolling Stone*?
Oh, look… I have no regrets, and I would do it all again despite the complaints from those hard-core fans who like our music how they like it. They don't hurt our feelings and we do take them seriously. But at the same time, as musicians you've got to push the boundaries just a little bit.

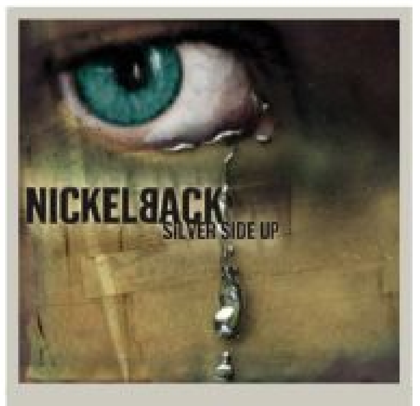
Your brother Chad doesn't do interviews any more, probably because he keeps putting his foot in it. What's it like to be in a band with such a journalist's delight?
Let me throw that back at you. Do you think you could be in a band with a sibling?

My sister and I would have killed one another by the first sound-check.
Yeah, it can be a challenge. In any walk of life you butt heads and disagree. But we formed this band with two brothers and a cousin [laughs]. Chad wears his emotions on his sleeve and it can be easy to light his fuse. I understand why you call him a journalist's delight. That's hilarious.

It's easy to push his buttons.
Yeah. I wish I was a journalist's delight, too, but I'm much harder to incite. With all hard-felt artists that really believe in what they're doing, to them it's not simply a chorus, an album or a song, it's the very core of their being. If you want to be mean to Chad, he's an easy target. My response to that is simple: get a helmet and deal with it – but I'm not Chad.

Nickelback are what us Brits call a Marmite band, there are very few lukewarm opinions. Are some people just jealous of your success?
I'm going to deflect that second part of your question, but I think it's great that we always inspire an emotional reaction. You learn to deal with the fact that it won't always be positive. Ubiquity comes with its share of contempt. That's something you find a way of handling very early on. **DL**

The tour begin in Glasgow on May 13.



BACK TO BASICS
★ The name: Mike Kroeger worked at Starbucks and gave customers a "nickel back" in their change.
★ *How You Remind Me* was the most-played song on US radio from 2001 to the end of '09.
★ *Billboard* ranks Nickelback the most successful rock group of that decade.

NICKELBACK: RICHARD BELAND/PRESS

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Ben Harper & Charlie Musselwhite

The roots-music pair pool their substantial resources.

Five years ago, the pair's first collaborative album, *Get Up!* hit No.1 in the US and won them a Grammy. Who could blame them for making a follow-up? Ben Harper (above left) previews their three UK shows.

What made you decide it was time to make another record with Charlie?
It just felt like time. I was taken aback by how well the first record did, and also how well he and I and his band had worked collectively. We knew right away that there was a sound for Charlie and I to go after.

That album, *No Mercy In This Land*, covers the "sonic history of American struggle and survival", but its themes are woven into some songs written from personal experience. Was the intention for it to work on different levels?
Well, I didn't want to preach. What we sought was communication from a sincere place. I wanted to be as personal as I could get without putting up a wall.

Charlie is twenty-six years older than you. Does that make him the senior partner?
There was a good amount of hero worship from me, and it took a period of adjustment but I think at a certain point it became peer-to-peer contact.

What was your reaction when Charlie said that you have "reinvented the blues in a great way: playing modern while preserving the feel"?
I'd not heard that before, and I'm the worst at taking compliments. But such high praise inspires me to keep moving forward.

Are your live shows a mix of songs from the two collaborative albums and some solo tunes from both sides?
It's tunes from the shared records, some songs from our pasts and a few covers.

After this touring cycle with Charlie ends, what's next – another record with the Innocent Criminals?
This is the first record I've made in twenty-five years without knowing what's on the horizon. In some ways it's scary. Maybe it'll be more production of other artists, but right now I really have no clue. **DL**

The last of the dates is in London on April 7.

NATHANIEL RATELIFF: BRANTLEY GUTIERREZ/PRESS

Nathaniel Rateliff And The Night Sweats

Take socks to their gigs – it won't mean you think they stink.

Having sung with musically differing acts, Nathaniel Rateliff founded the Night Sweats, a soulful R&B combo, five years ago. As they prepare for a tour that includes three nights at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire, the singer talks to *CR* about socks, their song *S.O.B.* and rock'n'roll.

You were in your mid-thirties when things really took off with *S.O.B.*. At that age had you begun to fear that it might not do so?
Yeah, I suppose I had been treading water. When that song came out I had thought it was my last effort. *S.O.B.* was one of the last songs we recorded for the first record. In fact I hadn't wanted to have it on there.

You even called it a "joke".
That was me being light-hearted. I wrote it as a filler for the live set, when we started out I had just thirty-five minutes of material, but of course people liked it. I was happier that the album went gold, selling half a million copies. People now seem to listen to one particular track, so it proved that they still enjoy albums.

If we said that the Night Sweats' second album, this year's *Tearing At The Seams*, doesn't sound like a product of the current era, would you take that as a compliment?
Oh, definitely. Unless you meant that as an insult [laughs]. But since that first record, after two hundred and eight days on the road in a single year we've really become a band. And we made this new record to please ourselves, first and foremost.

> **"We want people to know that we're a live band."**

Do you think there's enough soul in rock'n'roll these days?
To me there's not even enough rock'n'roll [laughs]. But we want people to know that we're a live band, and that's why a lot of *Tearing At The Seams* was recorded in just one take.

How did you come to sing on Chuck Berry's final album?
It's hard to explain. It just sort of happened. Sadly I didn't get to meet Mister Berry personally because the record [*Chuck*] was issued after he died [in 2017].

Last summer the band played the British Summer Time Festival with Kings Of Leon and the Pixies. That must have been fun?
Yeah, it was a lot of fun. At those bigger shows you never know what to expect, and at that one it felt like half of London was out there.

You've encouraged fans to bring new and used socks for the homeless to your gigs.
I suppose it's not an obvious way to help out, but those who live on the streets always need socks. They keep your feet warm, and if somebody does a lot of walking they stop them from getting inflamed. Longer term I'd like to change that focus to help develop housing for those affected. **DL**

The tour ends on April 21.

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Deen Castronovo (far left) with the Dead Daisies.

The Dead Daisies

The revolving-door collective play UK shows in April.

Formed five years ago by Australian musician, aviator and businessman David Lowy, The Dead Daisies have had a revolving line-up that has included members past and present of Guns N' Roses, Mötley Crüe, Thin Lizzy, Nine Inch Nails and more. Their latest member is former Bad English drummer Deen Castronovo, ousted from Journey in 2015 following domestic violence, unlawful use of a weapon and drug offences.

How did you come to join the Dead Daisies?
Doug [Aldrich, guitarist] texted to ask whether I was busy and did I fancy a trip to New York. Just three days later I was doing the record.

You knew Doug from Revolution Saints and you'd been in Soul Sirkus with bassist Marco Mendoza. Did you know anyone else in the Daisies before you joined?
No, but meeting John [Corabi, vocals] and David [Lowy, rhythm guitar] was a blast. They're great people.

The Daises is pretty much David Lowy's band. What's he like and why does he do it?
I'm only just getting to know him, but he's awesome. A businessman, a philanthropist and a guitarist in a rock band? Wow. That's cool. He does everything and the world is his oyster. He just goes for it.

People step on and off the Dead Daisies. Did the kind of temporary nature of the set-up appeal to you in some way?
Well, it's my first gig being back after what happened, so in that sense it's: "Thank the Lord – I can play again." I'm loyal. I was with Journey for seventeen years. I'm there till the Daisies get sick of me and don't want me any more!

> **"I was a mess. I tarnished the legacy of Journey."**

We're forbidden from discussing your arrest back in 2015, but on an emotional level you sound focused and re-energised.
Oh yes sir. I'm two years, seven months and one week clean, and that's the greatest feeling in the world. My fiancée and I are together and have never been better. Take the drugs out of the human being and the man stops being a crazed animal. I'm just grateful to God that I'm working again.

Were Journey justified in kicking you out?
That was the right thing to do. I was a mess. I tarnished the legacy of that amazing band. And I'm alive because of what they did.

You've played with both Neal Schon and Jonathan Cain again, so those fences are repaired.
Yes sir. I've been in bands with those two since I was twenty-three. They love me and we're brothers. Playing with Neal [at his Journey Through Time show], I never thought in a million years that would happen again.

And what does the future hold?
I'm going to be the best husband, father and grandfather I can be. My career comes second. **DL**

The Dead Daisies' tour begins in Glasgow on April 8.

(L-r) Clem Clempson, Jon Hiseman, Mark Clarke.

JCM

The newly formed power trio play a trio of UK dates.

A power trio named after its protagonists, all of whom have played in Colosseum, JCM brings together drummer Jon Hiseman (whose CV also includes Jack Bruce's band and Tempest), guitarist Dave 'Clem' Clempson (Bakerloo, Humble Pie) and bassist Mark Clarke (Tempest, Uriah Heep, Rainbow, Mountain). Hiseman looks ahead to an album, *Heroes*, and three British dates.

Colosseum played a final show at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire back in 2015. That must have been an emotional night?
Yeah. We were well aware that as a niche band you couldn't overfish the market. Colosseum could only tour every two to three years, and with my wife Barbara [Thompson, the band's saxophonist, who has Parkinson's disease] unable to work again in three more years it seemed best to end it all.

Talking to *Classic Rock* at the time, you admitted: "The trouble with Colosseum is that we never think it's ended."
Well, it has ended now. Chris [Farlowe, vocals] also recently broke a collar bone in a bad fall. Nobody is getting any younger. Colosseum had the most fantastic run, so I've got no complaints.

Clem Clempson was also a member of Tempest. Did you consider putting that band back together?
No. The idea for JCM came to me when two of my heroes, Allan Holdsworth [guitarist with Tempest and many more] and Larry Coryell [noted jazz guitarist], died in early 2017. I realised there was an album that could be made.

That covers album, *Heroes*, pays tribute to Jack Bruce, Graham Bond, Ollie Halsall, Gary Moore and others. How did you pick the songs?
I gave Clem a bunch of albums and allowed him to choose them, and he did a great job.

Besides *Four Day Creep* by Humble Pie, Jack Bruce's *Weird Of Hermiston* and *Grease The Wheels*, and Tempest's *Foyers Of Fun*, what else will JCM revisit?
I'd like to do another Jack Bruce song called *Bird Alone*, plus Colosseum's *Skellington*, and we'll play *Theme For An Imaginary Western* [also by Bruce] – all great songs that won't detract from the *Heroes* concept. **DL**

The last of JCM's three dates is in Wolverhampton on April 10.

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CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

Tour Dates

ACOUSTIC FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN
STEVE HARLEY, JOHN ILLSLEY, CHRIS DIFFORD, MORE

Uttoxeter	Racecourse	Jun 1-3

BRYAN ADAMS

Manchester	Arena	May 24
Birmingham	Genting Arena	May 25
Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	May 26
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 27
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	May 29
London	Wembley Arena	May 30
London	O2 Arena	May 31

THE ALARM

Glasgow	ABC	May 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 5
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 26

IAN ANDERSON & JETHRO TULL

Manchester	Apollo	Apr 3
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 5
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 6
Liverpool	Auditorium	Apr 7
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 9
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 10
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 11
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 17

A PERFECT CIRCLE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 12
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 13

ATOMIC ROOSTER

Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Jul 26

BATH FESTIVAL
ROBERT PLANT, TEARS FOR FEARS, MORE

Bath	Recreational Showground	May 26, 27

BEARDED THEORY FESTIVAL
ROBERT PLANT, JESUS & MARY CHAIN, THERAPY?, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Hall	May 24-27

BIG BIG TRAIN, BEATRIX PLAYERS

Basingstoke	The Anvil	Jul 11

BIG COUNTRY

Liverpool	Cavern Club	Sep 20
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 21
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 22
Newcastle	Academy	Oct 13
Harpenden	Public Halls	Oct 27
Manchester	Gorilla	Nov 2
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 3
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Nov 9
Northampton	Roadmender	Nov 10
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Nov 16
Hove	Old Market	Nov 17
Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 23
Cardiff	Globe	Nov 25

BLACKBERRY SMOKE

Newcastle	Academy	Nov 2
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 4
Belfast	Telegraph Building	Nov 6
Dublin	National Stadium	Nov 7
Cardiff	Tramshed	Nov 9
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 10
Bristol	Academy	Nov 11
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 13
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 15, 16
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 17

BLACK LABEL SOCIETY

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 5
Dublin	Tivoli	Apr 7
Belfast	Limelight	Apr 8

BLACKWATER CONSPIRACY, BUFFALO SUMMER

London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Apr 3

THE BLASTERS

London	Chelsea Under The Bride	Apr 29

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
JUDAS PRIEST, NIGHTWISH, MR. BIG, DORO, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 9-12

BLUES CARAVAN
BERNARD ALLISON, VANJA SKY, MIKE ZITO

Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 19
London	Manette Street Borderline	Apr 20
Exeter	Arts Centre	Apr 22
Worthing	Pier Pavilion	Apr 23
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Apr 24
Evesham	Iron Road	Apr 26
Hartlepool	United FC	Apr 28
Devizes	Long Street Blues Club	Apr 29

BLUES ON THE FARM
KING KING, NINE BELOW ZERO, MARTIN BARRE'S BLUES BAND, MORE

Canterbury	Woolton Farm	Jun 15-17

JOE BONAMASSA

London	Hampton Court Palace	Jun 12

THE BREEDERS

Dublin	Vicar Street	May 27
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	May 28
Leeds	Stylus	May 29
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 30
Bristol	Academy	Jul 10
Birmingham	Institute	Jul 11
Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 13

BRITISH STEEL FESTIVAL
GRIM REAPER, SEVEN SISTERS, DESOLATION ANGELS, MORE

London	Camden Underworld	May 25, 26

BRITROCK MUST BE DESTROYED!
REEF, THE WILDHEARTS, TERRORVISION, DODGY

Manchester	Academy	May 4
Birmingham	Digbeth Arena	May 5
London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 6
Glasgow	Academy	May 19
Newcastle	Academy	May 20
Leeds	Academy	May 24
Bristol	Motion	May 25
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 26

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Bristol	Academy	May 7
Brighton	Concorde 2	May 8
Birmingham	Academy 2	May 9
London	Camden Koko	May 11
Manchester	The Ritz	May 12
Glasgow	ABC	May 13

DANNY BRYANT

Bilston	Robin 2	May 7
Cambridge	Junction	May 8
London	Islington Bar Academy	May 9
Aberdeen	Tunnels	May 10
Derby	Flowerpot	May 11
St Helens	Citadel	May 12
Bishops Cleeve	Tithe Barn	May 13
Norwich	Waterfront	Jun 7
Fleet	The Harlington	Jun 8
Narberth	Queens Hall	Jun 9
Tavistock	Wharf	Jun 10
Dublin	Whelan's	Jun 12
Belfast	Empire	Jun 13
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Jun 14
Cleethorpes	Blues Festival	Jun 16
Stamford	Blues Festival	Jun 17

CAMBRIDGE ROCK FESTIVAL
FOCUS, ATOMIC ROOSTER, SPACE ELEVATOR, DAN REED NETWORK, MORE

Cambridge	Horseheath Lodge	Jul 26-29

CAMEL

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Sep 7
Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	Sep 8
Leamington	The Assembly	Sep 9
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Sep 10
Southampton	Guildhall	Sep 12
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 13
Birmingham	Town Hall	Sep 14
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 17

FRANCK CARDUCCI

Southampton	Talking Heads	Jul 26
Leicester	Firebug	Jul 27
Swindon	The Vic	Jul 28
Cambridge	Rock Festival	Jul 29

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS, PATTI SMITH, MORE

London	Victoria Park All Points East Festival	Jun 3

ROGER CHAPMAN FAMILY & FRIENDS

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Aug 3
Wickham	Wickham Festival	Aug 5

CHAS & DAVE

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 20
Bournemouth	Pavilion Theatre	Jun 2
Liverpool	Empire Theatre	Jun 10

THE ROLLING STONES

With one of the greatest catalogues of classic songs on the planet and Keith Richards riffing upfront? Get in!

See page 111 for dates. Currently May 5 - Jun 19

Blackburn	King George's Hall	Jun 23
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 1
Wolverhampton	Diamond Suite	Oct 26
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 28
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Dec 15
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Dec 16

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL
VAN MORRISON, IMELDA MAY, ERIC GALES, MORE

Cheltenham	Montpellier Gardens	May 2-7

CIRITH UNGOL, ANGEL WITCH, NIGHT DEMON, AMULET, MORE

London	Camden Black Heart	May 12

ERIC CLAPTON, SANTANA, STEVE WINWOOD, MORE

London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 8

CLEETHORPES BLUES, RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
GROUNDHOGS, PAUL LAMB & THE KING SNAKES, MORE

Cleethorpes	Moon On The Water	Jun 16

Recommended

CLUTCH

Bristol	Academy	Dec 18
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 19
Manchester	Academy	Dec 20
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 21
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 22

JOHN COGHLAN'S QUO

Cardiff	The Globe	Apr 7
London	Putney Half Moon	Apr 20
Morecambe	The Platform	May 25
Wavendon	The Stables	Jun 9
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jun 23
Marlborough	Manton Fest	Jun 30
Hook Norton	Music At The Crossroads	Jul 7

SHERYL CROW

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 19
Gateshead	The Sage	Jun 21
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 22

THE DEAD DAISIES, THE TREATMENT, THE AMORETTES

Glasgow	Garage	Apr 8
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 9
London	Camden Koko	Apr 10
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 14
Bristol	Academy	Apr 14

DEF LEPPARD, CHEAP TRICK

Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 1
Belfast	SSE Arena	Dec 2
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 4
London	O2 Arena	Dec 6
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 8
Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Dec 9
Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	Dec 11
Manchester	Arena	Dec 12
Sheffield	FlyDSA Arena	Dec 14
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Dec 15
Birmingham	Arena	Dec 17
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 18

DESERTFEST
MONSTER MAGNET, NAPALM DEATH, GRAVEYARD, MORE

London	Various venues	May 4-6

DOOMSDAY OUTLAW, DIRTY THRILLS, THE BRINK

London	Camden Black Heart	Apr 26

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
OZZY OSBOURNE, GUNS N' ROSES, AVENGED SEVENFOLD, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 8-10

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN

Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 23
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 26
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 28
Gateshead	The Sage	May 30
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 1

EELS

London	Brixton Academy	Jul 2
Manchester	Academy	Jul 3

EPICA

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 6
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 7
Bristol	Academy	Apr 8
Dublin	Tivoli	Apr 10
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 12
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 13

EVANESCENCE

Nottingham	Arena	Apr 3
Glasgow	Armadillo	Apr 5
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 6

FM

Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Apr 20
Sutton-in-Ashfield	The Diamond	Apr 21
Stourbridge	River Rooms	Apr 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	May 18
Norwich	Waterfront	May 19
Glasgow	Garage	May 25
Newcastle	Academy	May 26
Manchester	The Ritz	Jun 9

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Etihad Stadium	Jun 19
London	Stadium	Jun 22, 23

FOREIGNER, JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR, JOHN PARR

Manchester	Apollo	May 12
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 15
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 16

FOUR STICKS: CLASSIC ROCK WEEKENDER
DIAMOND HEAD, PRAYING MANTIS, BURNT OUT WRECK, MORE

London	New Cross Inn	Oct 5-7

THE ROLLING STONES: GETTY

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LIVE!

G3
JOE SATRIANI, JOHN PETRUCCI, ULI JON ROTH

Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Apr 24
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 25
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 26
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 27
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 29
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30

WALTER TROUT, WILKO JOHNSON, WISHBONE ASH, MORE

Co. Donegal	Ballyshannon	May 31-Jun 3

GARBAGE

London	Brixton Academy	Sep 14

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM,
THE FLATLINERS, MATTHEW RYAN

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jul 20
Dublin	Vicar Street	Jul 23
Glasgow	Barrowland	Jul 24
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 25

THE GRANDMOTHERS OF INVENTION

London	Camden Underworld	Apr 22
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 23
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Apr 24

JOHN HACKETT BAND

Sheffield	Greystones	May 5
Darlington	Forum	May 19
Maltby	Wesley Centre	Jun 2
Brighton	Green Door Store	Jul 13
East Molesey	Methodist Church	Jul 14
London	King's Cross Water Rats	Jul 15
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Aug 31
Kinross	Green Hotel	Sep 1
Colchester	Arts Centre	Sep 8
Garway	Village Hall	Sep 29
Cardiff	Acapela	Sep 30
Leeds	Seven Arts	Oct 13
Leicester	The Musician	Dec 1
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Dec 9

HARD ROCK HELL BLUES
KING KING, BERNIE MARSDEN, PAT McMANUS, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Apr 14, 15

HARPENDEN BLUES FESTIVAL
THE PRETTY THINGS, AYNSLEY LISTER, SIMON MCBRIDE, MORE

Harpenden	Public Halls	May 13

BEN HARPER & CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 3
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 6
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 7

BETH HART

Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 10
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 12
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Apr 14
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 15
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 18
Folkestone	Leas Hall	Apr 19
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Apr 21
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 24
Blackpool	Opera House	Apr 26
Hull	City Hall	Apr 27
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 30
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 1
Coventry	Cathedral	Nov 3
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 4
Cheltenham	Jazz Festival	May 5

JON HISEMAN-CLEM CLEMPSON-MARK CLARKE

Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Apr 7
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 9
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 10

ROBYN HITCHCOCK

Manchester	Academy	May 11
London	Malet Street ULU	May 12
Witney	Fat Li's	May 15
Bristol	Louisiana	May 16
Cambridge	Unitarian Church	May 18
St Leonards	Kino-Teatr	May 19
Hull	Fruit	May 22
Liverpool	Philharmonic Music Room	May 23
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 24
Sheffield	Hubs	May 25
Morecambe	More Music	May 26
Newton Abbot	Kingkerswell Church	May 29
Ramsgate	Music Hall	May 31
Dublin	Workman's Club	Jun 1

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES (ALICE COOPER, JOE PERRY, JOHNNY DEPP), THE DARKNESS, THE DAMNED

Birmingham	Genting Arena	Jun 16
Manchester	Arena	Jun 17
Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	Jun 19
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 20

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

KOYO

Here at *CR* we're diggin' their 21st-century progressive rock with psychedelic overtones and more. Get yourself a spade…

See below for dates. Currently April 9 to Jun 10

IQ

Bilston	Robin 2	May 5

IRON MAIDEN, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Jul 31
Belfast	SSE Arena	Aug 2
Aberdeen	Exhibition & Conference Centre	Aug 4
Manchester	Arena	Aug 6
Birmingham	Genting Arena	Aug 7
London	O2 Arena	Aug 10, 11

JADIS

Southampton	Talking Heads	May 3
St Helens	Citadel	May 4
London	Tufnell Park Dome	May 5

JANE LEE HOOKER

Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Apr 19
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Apr 20

WILKO JOHNSON

Bath	The Forum	May 3
Oxford	Academy	May 4
Norwich	UEA	May 5
Leeds	Stylus	May 10
Glasgow	ABC	May 11
Manchester	Academy	May 12

LAURENCE JONES

Manchester	Band On The Wall	May 3
Leamington Spa	Zephyr Lounge	May 4
Southampton	Talking Heads	May 5
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	May 10
Nottingham	Bodega	May 11
York	Fulford Arms	May 12
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 13

KING KING

Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Apr 14
Sheffield	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Apr 15
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Apr 20
Darvel	Town Hall	Apr 21
Hastings	St Mary In The Castle	May 3
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	May 4
Southampton	1865	May 5
Liverpool	Epstein Theatre	May 10
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	May 11
Clitheroe	The Grand	May 12
Chester	Live Rooms	May 17
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 18
Holmfirth	Picturedome	May 19
Frome	Cheese & Grain	May 26
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 27
Bilston	Robin 2	May 31
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Jun 1
Newport	Rock 7 Blues Festival	Jun 7

KOYO

Bristol	Louisiana	Apr 9
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Apr 10
Birmingham	Sunflower Lounge	Apr 11
Manchester	Soup Kitchen	Apr 13
Leicester	The Musician	Apr 18
London	Hackney Sebright Arms	May 1
Leeds	Live In Leeds Festival	May 5
London	Camden Rocks Festival	Jun 2
Corby	White Hart	Jun 7
Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 10

LENNY KRAVITZ

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 19
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 20
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 22

LAST GREAT DREAMERS

Birmingham	Asylum 2	Apr 7
London	Camden Black Heart	Apr 12
Cannock	The Station	Apr 13
Bridgend	Hobos	Apr 14
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Apr 15
Wakefield	Black Mass	Apr 18
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Apr 19
Carlisle	Embers	Apr 20
Glasgow	Nice 'N' Sleazy	Apr 21
Newcastle	Trillions	Apr 22

LEICESTER ROCKS
DR FEELGOOD, CHERI LYNN, MORE

Leicester	Arena	Jun 3

LIFESIGNS

Chepstow	Winter's End Festival	Apr 29
London	Resonate Festival	Sep 8

LINCOLN BLUES FESTIVAL
THE PRETTY THINGS, AYNSLEY LISTER, SIMON McBRIDE, MORE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	May 12

LINCOLN FOLK ROOTS & WORLD FESTIVAL
PENTANGLE, JULIE FELIX, BLAIR DUNLOP, MORE

Lincoln	Alive	Jul 14

LINDISFARNE

Basingstoke	Haymarket	Apr 6
Horsham	The Capitol	Apr 7
Canterbury	Westgate Hall	Apr 8

LOVE SUPREME JAZZ FESTIVAL
STEVE WINWOOD, ELVIS COSTELLO, GEORGE CLINTON, MAVIS STAPLES, MORE

East Sussex	Glynde Place	Jun 29-Jul 1

MACHINE HEAD

Southampton	Guildhall	May 13
Cardiff	University	May 14
Bristol	Academy	May 15
Birmingham	Academy	May 17
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 18, 19
Nottingham	Rock City	May 21
Newcastle	Academy	May 22
Glasgow	Academy	May 23
Manchester	Academy	May 25

MAGENTA

Cardiff	The Globe	Apr 6
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Apr 7
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 8

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Newcastle	Metro Radio Arena	Apr 23
Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	Apr 25
Birmingham	Arena	Apr 27
Manchester	Arena	Apr 28
Llandudno	Venue Cymru Arena	May 1
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 2
London	Wembley Arena	May 4
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 5

MARILLION

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Apr 8
Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 9
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 11
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 13
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 14
Brighton	Dome	Apr 16
Bristol	Colston Hall	Apr 17
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 19
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Apr 20
York	Barbican	Apr 22

MASSIVE WAGONS

London	Manette Street Borderline	Apr 6
Wakefield	Snooty Fox	Apr 7
Glasgow	Cathouse	Apr 8

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Southampton	Talking Heads	Apr 12
Harpenden	Public Halls	Apr 13
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	May 10
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	May 11
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	May 18
Norwich	Waterfront	May 19
Nottingham	Bodega	Jun 1
Bilston	Robin 2	Jun 7

MINISTRY

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jul 21

MONSTER MAGNET

London	Camden Desertfest	May 6
Manchester	Gorilla	May 31
Glasgow	Garage	Jun 1
Belfast	Limelight	Jun 2
Dublin	Tivoli	Jun 3

MYSTERY, PRESTO BALLET

Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 22
Leicester	The Musician	Apr 23
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Apr 24

NEWPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
KING KING, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, BEEN POOLE, MORE

Newport	Neon	Jun 2

NICKELBACK, SEETHER

Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	May 3
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 5
Liverpool	Echo Arena	May 7
Manchester	Arena	May 8
Birmingham	Genting Arena	May 10
London	O2 Arena	May 11
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	May 13

NOFX

Birmingham	Institute	Jun 14
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 15

JIZZY PEARL

Edinburgh	Bannermans	May 2
Newcastle	Think Tank	May 3
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	May 4
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	May 5
Cardiff	Seven Sins Festival	May 6
Oxford	The Bullingdon	May 9
Evesham	Iron Road	May 10
Buckley	Tivoli	May 11
Ballymena	Diamond Rock Club	May 12
London	Camden Underworld	May 13
Reading	Face Bar	May 16
Norwich	Waterfront	May 17
Carlisle	Embers	May 18
Glasgow	Audio	May 19
Blackpool	Waterloo	May 20
Manchester	Gullivers	May 24
Birmingham	Asylum 2	May 25
Leicester	Firebug	May 26
Bournemouth	The Anvil	May 27

Recommended

PEARL JAM

London	O2 Arena	Jun 18, 19

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

PENDRAGON

London	Great Portland Street 229 Club	Nov 9

PREMIATA FORNERIA MARCONI

Southampton	1865	May 16
London	Islington Academy	May 17

THE PRETTY THINGS

Lincoln	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	May 12

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Harpenden	Public Halls	May 13
Isle Of Wight	Festival	Jun 24
London	Putney Half Moon	Jul 13

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 5
Bournemouth	Academy	Apr 6
Brighton	Dome	Apr 7
Margate	Winter Gardens	Apr 8
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 10
Swansea	Brangwyn Hall	Apr 11
Liverpool	Olympia	Apr 12
Leicester	De Montford Hall	Apr 13
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 14
Middlesbrough	Empire	Apr 16
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 17

KEN PUSTELNIK'S GROUNDHOGS, CROW BLACK CHICKEN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 24

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

London	Wembley Arena	Jul 1
London	O2 Arena	Jul 2, 4
Glasgow	TRNSMY Festival	Jul 6

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, IGGY POP, THE HIVES, MORE

London	Finsbury Park	Jun 30

QUIREBOYS

Bristol	Thekla	Apr 6
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 7
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 12
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Apr 13
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 14
Aberdeen	The Assembly	Apr 20
Dundee	Church	Apr 21
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Apr 22

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR THE CULT, MOTT THE HOOPLE, HALESTORM, SONS OF APOLLO, STEEL PANTHER, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jun 30, Jul 1

NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 11-13
Manchester	Albert Hall	Apr 14
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Apr 18, 19
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Apr 20
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 21

READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS FALL OUT BOY, KINGS OF LEON, PANIC AT THE DISCO!, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 24-26
Leeds	Bramham Park	Aug 24-26

REEF

Lincoln	Engine Shed	Apr 26
Hull	The Welly	Apr 27
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 28

ROCKINGHAM FESTIVAL NELSON, VIXEN, PRETTY MAIDS, MORE

Nottingham	Trent University	Oct 19-21

THE ROLLING STONES

Dublin	Croke Park	May 5
London	London Stadium	May 22, 25
Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 5
Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	Jun 9
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 15
Twickenham	Stadium	Jun 19

SAXON, Y&T, WAYWARD SONS

Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 18
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 19
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 20
Manchester	Academy	Oct 21

THE SHEEPDOGS

Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 9
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Apr 10
London	Islington The Lexington	Apr 11

IAN SIEGAL

London	Camden Jazz Café	Apr 11
Brighton	Komedia	Apr 12
Godalming	Wilfrid Noyce Centre	Apr 13
Devizes	Long St Blues Club	Apr 14
Teignmouth	Pavilions	Apr 15
Bristol	Tunnels	Apr 16
Poole	Mr Kyps	Apr 17
Cheltenham	Vonnies	Apr 18
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 19
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Apr 20
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Apr 21
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 22
Norwich	Arts Centre	Apr 24
Hull	Fruit	Apr 25
Sheffield	The Greystones	Apr 26

PAUL SIMON

Manchester	Arena	Jul 10

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES

Alice Cooper, Joe Perry and Johnny Depp front this mostly-covers collective. If Carlsberg made covers supergroups…

See opposite page for dates. Currently June 16-20

Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	Jul 11
Dublin	RDS Arena	Jul 13

PAUL SIMON, JAMES TAYLOR, BONNIE RAITT, MORE

London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 15

THE SKIDS

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Jun 1
Manchester	Academy	Jun 2
Reading	Sub 89	Jun 7
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Jun 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	Jun 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jun 15
Newcastle	Academy	Jun 16
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 23
Liverpool	Academy	Jun 23
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Jun 27
Bilston	Robin 2	Jun 28
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jun 29
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 30

SKINDRED, CKY, DANKO JONES

Norwich	UEA	Apr 19
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 21
Manchester	Academy	Apr 22
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 24
Bristol	Academy	Apr 25
Leeds	Academy	Apr 27
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 28
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 29

SONS OF APOLLO

Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 1
Motherwell	Concert Hall	Jul 2
Belfast	Limelight	Jul 3
Dublin	Tivoli	Jul 4

SPACE ELEVATOR

Sutton-in-Ashfield	The Diamond	May 17
Bathgate	Dreadnought	May 18
Wigan	Old Courts Theatre	May 19
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 20
High Wycombe	Buckinghamshire University	May 24
London	The Hammersmith Club	May 25
Oxford	Bullingdon	May 31
Gravesend	Red Lion	Jun 15
Cambridge	Rock Festival	Jul 29

STAMFORD BLUES, RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL GROUNDHOGS, PAUL LAMB & THE KING SNAKES, MORE

Stamford	Corn Exchange	Jun 16

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL GLENN HUGHES, BLACK STAR RIDERS, DAN REED NETWORK, THE QUIREBOYS, MORE

Ebbew Vale	Hafod-Y-Dafal Farm	Jul 27-29

STEREOPHONICS

Wrexham	Racecourse Ground	Jun 2
Cardiff	City Stadium	Jun 9

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS

Leeds	Millennium Square	May 25
Hatfield	Forum	May 26
Birmingham	NEC Lakeside	May 27

STONEDEAF FESTIVAL SKID ROW, QUIREBOYS, ANVIL, MORE

Nottingham	Newark Showgrounds	Aug 25

STONE FREE FESTIVAL SCORPIONS, YES: ANDERSON RABIN & WAKEMAN, MEGADETH, ROGER HODGSON, JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Jun 16, 17

STONE SOUR

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 17
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jun 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 19

JAMES TAYLOR & ALL-STAR BAND, BONNIE RAITT

Manchester	Arena	Jul 9
Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	Jul 10
Leeds	Direct Arena	Jul 12

TAX THE HEAT

Bristol	Rough Trade	Apr 7
Sheffield	Foundry Studio	Apr 19
Southampton	Heartbreakers	Apr 20
Birmingham	Flapper & Firkin	Apr 21
Brighton	Sticky Mike's Frog Bar	Apr 23
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Apr 24
Manchester	Night People	Apr 25
Newcastle	Jumpin' Jack's	Apr 28
Glasgow	Stereo	Apr 29
Hull	Polar Bear	Apr 30

TESTAMENT, ANNIHILATOR VADER

London	Camden Koko	Apr 4

THEE HYPNOTICS

Newport	Le Pub	Apr 4
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 5
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Apr 6
Manchester	Night People	Apr 7
Brighton	The Albert	Apr 8
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 11
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Apr 12
London	Walthamstow Mirth, Marvel And Maud	Apr 13
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 14
Ramsgate	Music Hall	Apr 15

Recommended

TOTO

Dublin	Vicar Street	Apr 4
Belfast	Waterfront Auditorium	Apr 7
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Apr 8

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

TRINITY LIVE STEVE ROTHERY, TOUCHSTONE, GHOST COMMUNITY, MORE

London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 12

TRIVIUM, CODE ORANGE, POWER TRIP, VENOM PRISON

Bristol	Academy	Apr 16
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 17

Glasgow	Academy	Apr 17
Manchester	Academy	Apr 20
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 21

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Bromsgrove	Artrix	Apr 6
Swindon	Victoria	Apr 7
Bishops Cleeve	Tithe Barn	Apr 8
Glasgow	The Ferry	Apr 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Apr 13
Hartlepool	Belle Vue Club	Apr 14
Sheffield	The Greystones	Apr 15
Barnet	Bull Theatre	Apr 21

UGLY KID JOE, PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS

Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 17
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 18
Birmingham	Institute 2	Apr 19
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 20
Brighton	Concorde 2	Apr 21

VEGA, MIDNITE CITY

Lanarkshire	Wildfire Festival	Jun 23
Manchester	Ruby Lounge	Jun 28
Newcastle	Riverside	Jun 29
Glasgow	Stereo	Jun 30
Cardiff	Fuel	Jul 5
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Jul 6
London	Camden Underworld	Jul 7

ROGER WATERS

Glasgow	SSE Hydro Arena	Jun 29
Liverpool	Echo Arena	Jul 2
Manchester	Arena	Jul 3
London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 6
Birmingham	Arena	Jul 7

WAYWARD SONS

Ballymena	Diamond Rock Club	Apr 13
York	Fibbers	Apr 19
Sheffield	Academy 2	Apr 20
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 21
Edinburgh	Mash House	Apr 22
Wolverhampton	Slade Rooms	Apr 24
London	Islington Academy 2	Apr 25
Bristol	The Fleece	Apr 26
Nottingham	Rock City Basement	Apr 27
Brighton	Sticky Mike's Frog Bar	Apr 29
Cardiff	The Globe	Apr 30

THE WHITE BUFFALO

Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 15
Glasgow	ABC	Apr 16
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 17
Oxford	Academy	Apr 19
Bristol	Academy	Apr 20
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 21

BARRENCE WHITFIELD & THE SAVAGES

Dublin	Grand Social	May 2
Belfast	CQAF	May 3
Ballydehob	Jazz Festival	May 5
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	May 9
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 10
Middlesbrough	Westgarth Social Club	May 11
Manchester	Soup Kitchen	May 12
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 13
Birmingham	Academy 3	May 15
Oxford	Academy 3	May 16
Southend-on-Sea	Railway	May 18
London	Highbury Garage	May 19

WILDFIRE FESTIVAL LIONHEART, MASSIVE WAGONS, BLACK CAT BONES, MORE

Lanarkshire	Biggar	Jun 22-24

WINTER'S END FESTIVAL ARENA, LIFESIGNS, GORDON GILTRAP, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Apr 26-28

WINTERSTORM FESTIVAL MAGNUM, THE DEAD DAISIES, GUN, MORE

Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 23, 24

ANDREW WK

Cardiff	Great Hall	Apr 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 14
Birmingham	Academy 2	Apr 15
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 19
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21

YES FEATURING ANDERSON, RABIN & WAKEMAN

Newcastle	City Hall	Jun 12
York	Barbican	Jun 13
London	O2 Arena Stone Free Festival	Jun 17

ZODIAC MINDWARP & THE LOVE REACTION

London	New Cross Inn	May 19

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES: GETTY

'The band skilfully blend musical tropes new and old.'

Stone Broken

Brighton The Haunt

Black Country rockers step up to headline status, fortified by cups of tea, Vimto, fresh fruit and veg, and the odd 'stripper song'.

Rich Moss: #Vimto.

★ It's the kind of thing that would cause less tolerant musicians to lay waste to their dressing room and piss on the sound desk in uncontrollable rage. But Keiron Conroy of Stone Broken simply looks round the band's tiny dressing room in Brighton and shrugs: "No teacups. What am I going to do?"

His restraint is admirable, for this is no minor issue. We're talking about a man whose hoodie is emblazoned with the slogan 'MÖTLEY BRËW', and whose instagram handle is @bassandtea. It's his rock'n'roll mouthwash of choice.

In contrast, his bandmate, lead singer Rich Moss, raises a bottle of dark liquid to his lips and proposes a toast to his altogether more potent choice of beverage. But what exactly is that he's sipping? Rum? Bourbon? Brandy?

"Vimto," he says, smacking his lips in approval. "I swear by it."

To his right, guitarist Chris Davis munches quietly on some carrot sticks, and drummer Robyn Haycock peels a satsuma. Meanwhile, six bottles of beer lie untouched, unloved and unrefrigerated on a table by the door.

This Walsall-based quartet of 20-somethings have spent much of the past 18 months learning at the feet of veteran rock acts as a support act, but they're not about to fall into the older generation's lifestyle traps and let their shows slide into chaos on a slippery slope of free booze, casual drug use and broken friendships. They're about to release *Ain't Always Easy*, the follow-up to their widely acclaimed 2016 debut album *All In Time*, they're on the first date of their debut headline tour, and they ain't messing about.

"I aim to be singing for the next thirty years at least," says Moss. "And the truth is, I can't sing after I've had a beer, so I don't drink at all on the road."

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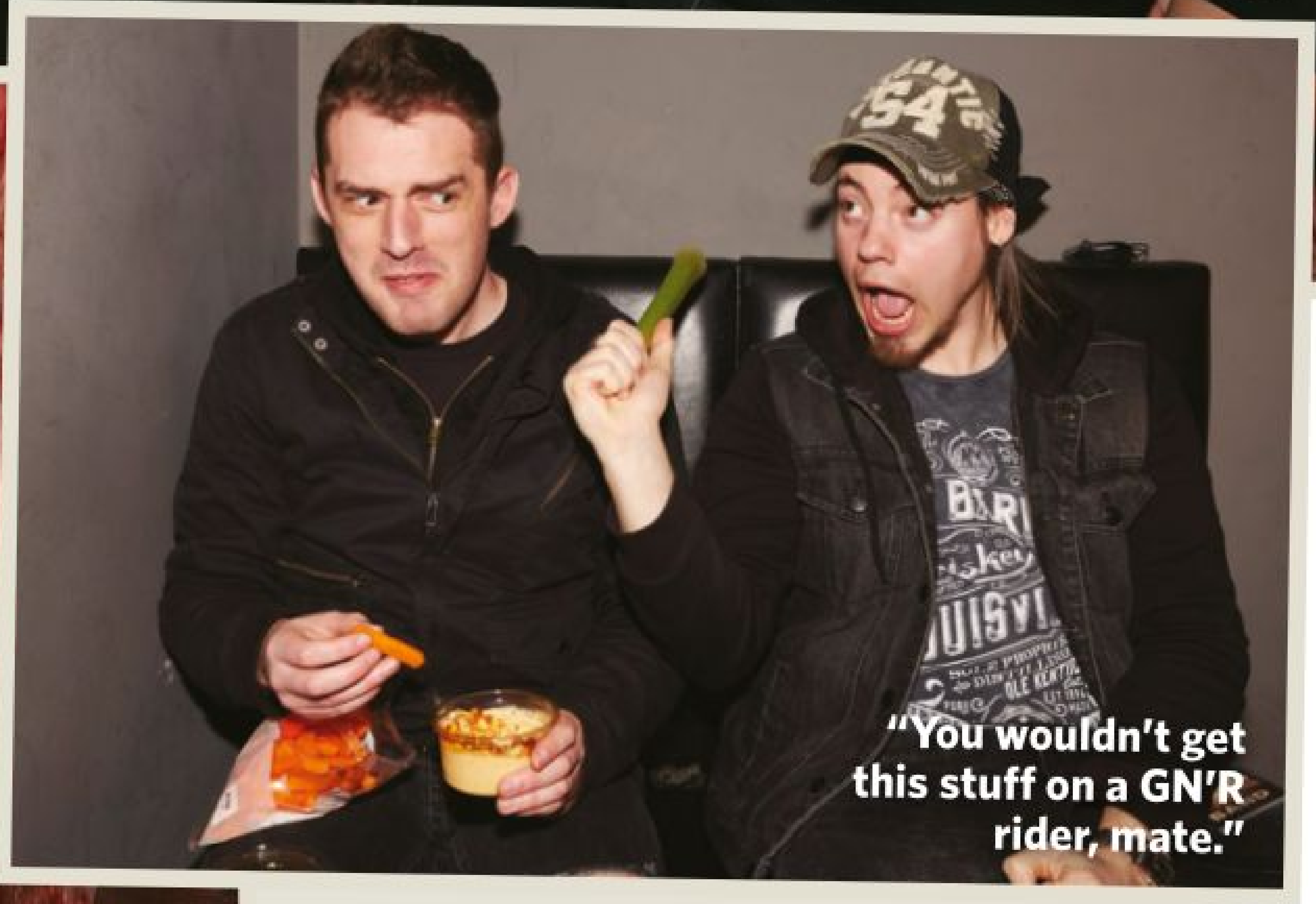
"All for one and one for... How does the last bit go?"

Either one of them or three of them misheard what the photographer asked them to do.

Sign of the times...



"You wouldn't get this stuff on a GN'R rider, mate."

The rest of the band follow suit for the most part. "In this day and age you have to stay healthy," reckons Davis, "because touring is your bread and butter. It also means we can trade drinks for favours from other bands. 'Can your tech fix my guitar? We'll swap him for some beers.'"

And so far their policy seems a smart one. Their profile over the past couple of years has been steadily rising, a fact that will be confirmed further when tomorrow night they headline the Winter's End festival along the coast in Dorset.

But it all sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Surely they must have some weaknesses.

And sure enough, after posing for a few photos they all slip away mysteriously. We find them huddled outside in a back-street doorway next to some bins, sucking on grimy looking pipes, gasping with relief that they no longer have to keep up this ascetic pretence.

Yes, the truth is revealed: at least three of Stone Broken are chronic vapers. Haycock grins ruefully as she confesses: "I must be on three tanks a day."

Touring, as their album title would have it, *Ain't Always Easy*, and the band are happy to impart tales from the road they've been following for the past couple of years, around the UK and beyond as support to the likes of Glenn Hughes, Cheap Trick and Living Colour. And although it'll be a case of no sleep 'til Dorset tonight as they all pile into a van and then drive, caked in sweat and shower-free, the three hours to the town where they'll be playing tomorrow night, they expect to arrive at a more agreeable place to bed down than some they've encountered.

"We stayed in one place in Slovakia that was like something out of a horror film," Moss recalls. "You could hear men screaming on the other side of the walls. And then you walk into the communal toilets and there's blood everywhere. So that was awesome."

"It's character-building, though, at the end of the day," the perennially cheery Haycock says, grinning.

And relationship-building, it seems. Robyn and Rich, bonded by a decade-long personal and professional partnership, might be mum and dad in this nuclear family, but the others are taking their responsibility to rock till you drop pretty seriously too.

'One time I was literally throwing up as we went on stage.'
Chris Davis

"One time I was literally throwing up as we went on stage," Davis recalls. "We had a roadie at the side of the stage with a bucket ready. I puked up into a bucket as our intro music was playing, and then as soon as it was finished I rushed over to it and puked again.

"Somehow he managed not to throw up during the set," Moss adds. "But it was like having a different member of the band. Normally he's really animated, but this was like he was a member of The Hives or something."

No such inhibitions tonight as the quartet bound on to The Haunt's stage in front of newly made backdrops replete with flashing vertical strip lights and a band motto spelling 'All In Time' in Latin. Carpe diem, motherfuckers!

While Davis and Conroy immediately leap on to platforms at the front of stage, as if permanently perched on the monitors, Moss cuts a distinctive if strangely dwarfed figure lower down at centre-stage, but as they open with *Heartbeat Away* his customary growl and exhortations to "Make some noise, Brightaaaan!" make it clear who's the MC round here. There's a righteous passion to this song that makes it one of the highlights of the new album, and according to Moss, that reflects the lyrics, tackling the ever-thorny topic of domestic violence.

"It's the thing that angers me the most," he says. "That first line is: '*I hear her screaming from the bedroom.*' That fires me up."

And here we see the irony inherent in so much heavy music these days: lyrics that insist we confront the bleakest subject matter you can think of, set to music that demands we throw our hair in the air like we just don't care.

Yet while there are plenty more examples of Stone Broken drawing lyrically on life's bitterest lemons to ▷

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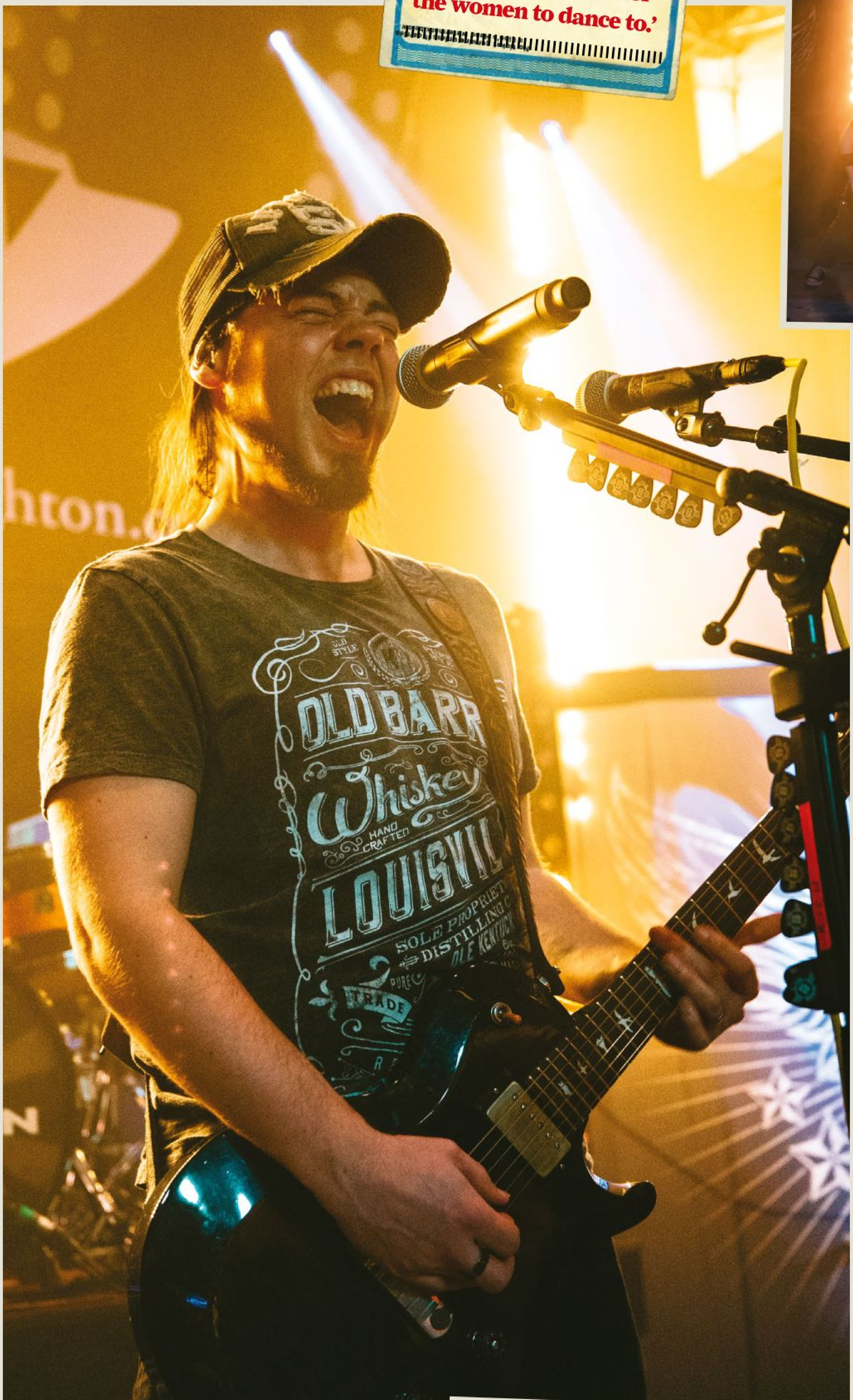
> 'You've got to have a stripper song. One for the women to dance to.'



Rich Moss gives it some vocal power.

make rock'n'roll lemonade, there's also a broad streak of positivity running through Moss's lyrics.

Better is the next song played tonight, the 2016 single lifting a sell-out audience with a thumping exhortation to '*stop wasting your life away*'. In truth, that ship has almost sailed for tonight's surprisingly mature audience, one whose average age has clearly been raised by the lasting impression Stone Broken made on veteran rock crowds at festivals such as Ramblin' Man and last year's Winter's End, as well as the aforementioned support tours. But they're as effusive as any audience half their age, even if stage-diving is a little beyond their spectator skill-set these days.

As for the band, you can tell they're continuing to develop a commanding stage presence as they find out what it means to be the star attraction.

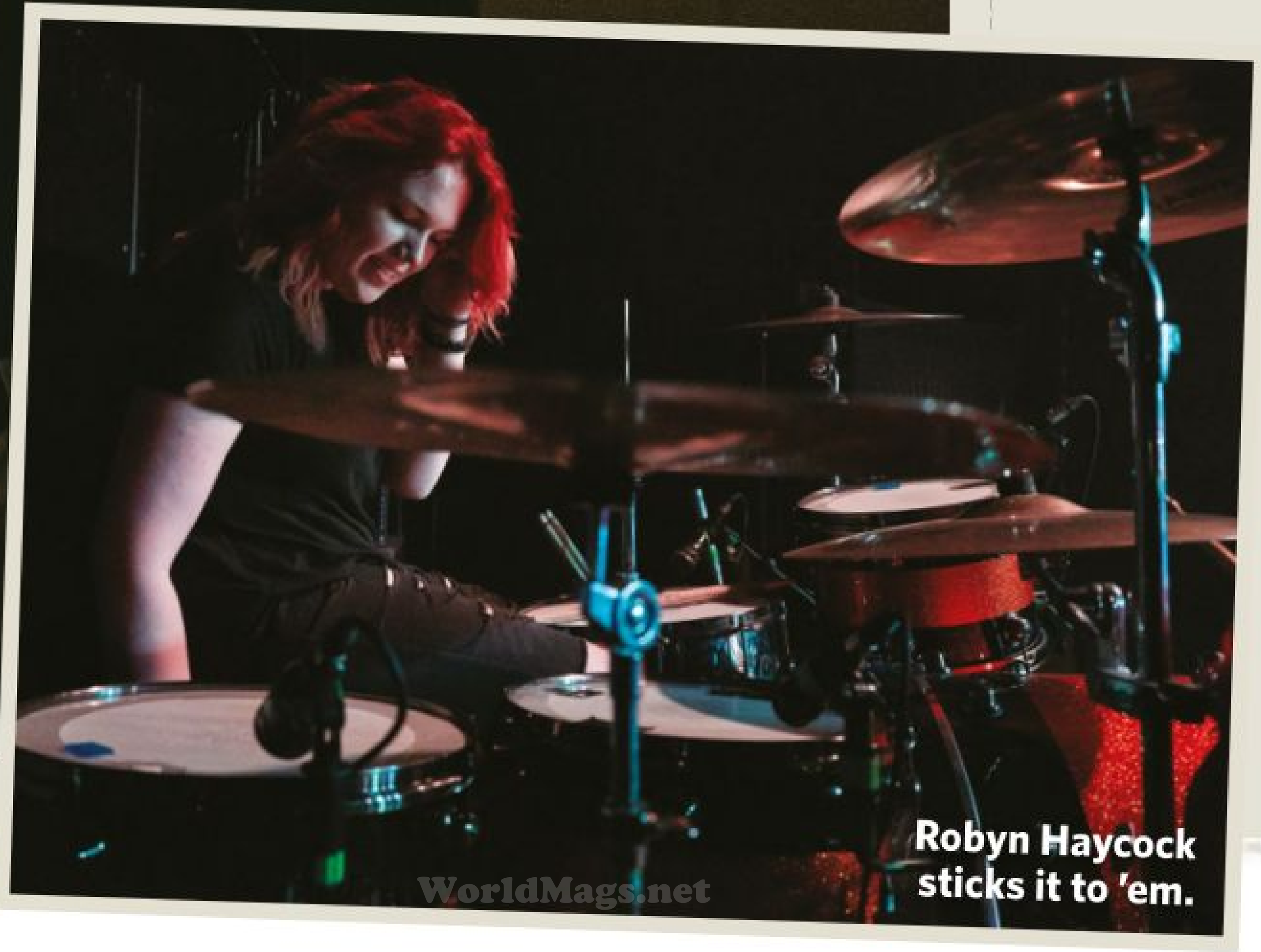
Moss is clad, as ever, in a baseball cap over a bandana, a hat he alternates with a beany with such unfailing regularity that, should he ever achieve serious fame, he'd do it the opposite way to the traditional celebrity disguise, dispensing with the hat and glasses and instantly becoming anonymous. "I have actually got hair under there, you know," he confides shockingly at one point tonight.

Yet his position as centre of attention is regularly upstaged not just by the two sidemen, but also by the irresistibly energetic figure of Robyn Haycock on drums, overseeing the whole stage from behind like a storm-haired, stick-flailing goddess.

The vibe is infectious as they rip into each song like kids tearing into wrapping paper at Christmas. And if that lyrical theme of eating life for breakfast while it's still hot on the plate recurs again on songs such as *Worth Fighting For* and *Be There* ('*Don't stop cos it ain't gonna wait for you*', the latter demands), it's the result of a tough band back-story that might explain some of their more single-minded lifestyle choices.

"The band me and Robyn were in before this one, the guitarist had an alcohol problem," Moss will explain later. "It got the better of him in the end and he died. I spent a few years just completely disillusioned, thinking I want no part of this business. But in the end I dealt with it by forcing myself to pick my guitar back up and write about it. And that's when the songs for this band started coming together."

Stone Broken formed in 2013 from the ashes of that ill-fated band and another Black Country-based outfit that Chris and Kieron left, and tonight, nearly five years on, we find them skilfully blending musical tropes new and old: throwing up melodic echoes of Foo



Robyn Haycock sticks it to 'em.

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Job done.

Fighters (*Doesn't Matter*, *Just A Memory*), power ballad anthemics (*Home*), the machine-gun riffage and fret-frying of the post-thrash generation (*Let Me Go*), and the streamlined hard pop of Royal Blood (*Follow Me*).

When they depart the stage to allow Haycock that highly endangered feature of modern rock shows, the drum solo, and later walk back on to the sound of the PA blasting out a medley of *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, *Girls Girls Girls* and *Cherry Pie*, it feels like we're also seeing two unashamed nods to less fashionable rock traditions. It's an introduction to part two of the show and to *Let Me See It All*, a new song with a pronounced lascivious glint in its eye.

"It was Robyn's idea to have a sleazy track," Moss tells the audience by way of introduction. And earlier she confirmed this when, during our chat, she explained: "I said to Rich: 'You've got to have a stripper song. We need one for the women to dance to,'" she explained.

"I played her the riff," Rich added, "and she's like: 'Yeah, man!'"

However, while its gutsy, grinding groove instantly hits the spot live, a closer listen reveals a lyric that is a slightly darker affair, telling the seedy tale of a man addicted to the illicit voyeuristic thrill of lap-dancing clubs as helplessly as a junkie jonesing for a fix.

Addiction is another recurring lyrical theme for their songs, but in truth, the only more-ish thing this band are interested in (regular e-cigarettes notwithstanding) is hooks and choruses, which are present and correct in pretty much all of their songs, each of which, they admit, are intended as potential singles. In fact, occasionally you wonder if their ambition is such that they're edging ever close to don't-bore-us-get-to-the-chorus, stadium rock territory at the expense of the heavy edge that first hit us squarely in the gut on early singles such as *Let Me Go*.

But although they begin their encore tonight with Moss's solo acoustic version of *Wait For You*, further proving their ability to write a potent power ballad and prompting a surprise singalong, we're not about to complain when the twanging shuffle riff, pounding metal chug and booming anthemics of *Not Your Enemy* follows it to send us all home comprehensively energised.

Except no one's going home quite yet. The band don't pause for so much as a pee break after stepping off stage before they dash round to the merchandise stall to sign CDs, records, T-shirts and anything else that a Sharpie can leave a stain on. This despite having met with competition winners earlier for much the same purpose. Other bands may do their social mingling online, but Stone Broken prefer the personal touch, and that may be one reason why they're building an enviably loyal following.

Fans for the memory.

"This is the twenty-seventh time I've seen them," says Michael from Oxford, sporting a 'Broken Army' T-shirt and a broad grin. "Each time I see them they seem to get better."

In contrast, Richard has travelled from Portsmouth with his mum. "It's not just my first Stone Broken gig, it's my first *ever* gig," he enthuses. "I just heard them on the radio and was blown away. My mum tried to get the new album, but because it wasn't out yet she got us tickets instead. I reckon this time in 2020 these guys will be massive worldwide. They've got the look and they've got the songs…"

Stone Broken are not just keen to meet people, either. Their tour manager sent out a message to promoters inviting them to bring their dogs to the venue, as the band are big canine fans. Never work with children or animals? Pah!

But how much can you give to others before sacrificing yourself? And given that there's a couple in the band, how do they manage to get any time to themselves?

"You know what? We're not the average couple," says Moss. "When we do the band thing we're bandmates; when we're not with the band we're a couple. When we've been on tour before, even though she was with me the whole time, I actually felt like I was missing her a little bit, because we don't have that relationship on the road. But I'm just glad I can turn around and she's behind me every single night, you know?"

So maybe this is the way forward for 21st-century rock'n'roll bands – combine the personal with the professional, stay off the sauce, be kind to your fans and animals, and rock until you puke. Because unless it's suddenly announced that vaping kills, Stone Broken look unstoppable right now.

Words: **Johnny Sharp** Photos: **Marie Korner**

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> 'This is an evening full of mesmerising quality, from Goddess to gods.'

Heavy metal thunder: Saxon bassist Nibbs Carter and frontman Biff Byford.

Saxon put on a heads-down, no-nonsense metal master class.

Saxon, Diamond Head, Rock Goddess

Cambridge Corn Exchange

Old-school Brit metal at its finest.

★ Talk about a cross-generational audience. There are certainly those who were here in 1979 when Saxon opened for Motörhead on their *Bomber* tour, while others have barely crept into their teens, being the same age as the original Rock Goddess trio would have been when they first started out.

Now the same Goddess three are on stage showing the same enthusiasm and drive as back then, albeit now tempered with a welcome musical dexterity and a mature focus. Jody Turner remains the earthy fulcrum, as bassist Tracey Lamb and drummer Julie Turner are fiercely combative.

The band, though, don't simply relive old memories. New songs *Why Do We Never Learn* and *It's More Than Rock And Roll* get a deservedly sturdy reaction, even if old fave *Heavy Metal Rock 'N' Roll* is still their firm roof raiser.

Someone scathingly, and unfairly, describes Diamond Head here as a tribute band. But let's be clear: founder/guitarist Brian Tatler has now got the band's best line-up in decades. Rasmus Bom Andersen is a striking vocalist and, thankfully, a long way removed from being a Sean Harris clone. Rhythm guitarist Andy Abberley is missing, due to illness. But in his absence, Tatler seems to shine even more brightly, as if showing that he really doesn't need to be complemented by a second guitarist.

And the set feels more balanced with Diamond Head reverting back to being a four-piece. There's no doubt they have much to offer the modern rock world. How ironic, therefore, that with the exception of *Bones*, the set could have been played in 1980, because all the songs come from that golden period for the band.

It's also a clever move, though, as with little time available, the band want to maximise their impact, and the likes of *Helpless*, *In The Heat Of The Night* and *The Prince* are so well known to everyone that fan approval

Diamond geezers: Brian Tatler (right) and his Head boys.

Rock Goddess (Jody Turner pictured): still capable of raising the roof.

is guaranteed. There will be time on future headlining tours to slot in new material. This is about milking the magic of the obvious, and climaxing with the iconic *Am I Evil* is a no-brainer.

Almost as soon as Diamond Head finish, the fire alarm goes off. At first nobody notices or takes any notice, until harassed Corn Exchange staff herd everyone out. There's no hint of panic as people amble out into the clogged area outside, stopping the flow of traffic (well, two cars in a side street). Thankfully, it's a false alarm (the result of a problem in the Rock Goddess dressing room – not anything to do with the band, by the way). And swerving the need to make everyone go back through security checks, the door staff get the crowd back inside remarkably fast.

So Saxon are on stage barely 15 minutes late, and as soon as they roar into *Thunderbolt* and *Sacrifice*, it's clear that not only have the band taken the interruption in their stride, but so have the fans. This could easily have disrupted the atmosphere, but if anything, it gives things a renewed edge. "Something similar happened when we played here in the 80s," remarks Biff early in the band's performance, before quipping, "but the delay did give us the chance to work out that if we played every song we've recorded in a series of gigs at the Corn Exchange, then we'd have to do 12 successive nights!"

Not that the band have such plans for tonight, but they still pack a lot in. There's a nice balance between newer tracks, six of which are from current album *Thunderbolt*, and the classic stuff. And the sold-out crowd love the comparatively unknown 2018 songs almost as much as the music on which Saxon have built their reputation. There's a reason for this, though, and it's the vast affection these days for Biff et al. They're acknowledged as the heart and soul of the NWOBHM, representing the best from that influential era. Iron Maiden have become too massive to carry the flame from that period into battle, so it's left to Saxon, who do it with blazing brilliance.

'Saxon's whole set is riveting, the songs fired out with verve and passion.'

In Biff they have a frontman who has an economy of movement, but makes every step count in the most dramatic fashion. He also has a way of getting the audience to do exactly what he wants, without ever having to do much more than raise an eyebrow.

The whole set is riveting, but things are taken up a notch when *They Played Rock And Roll* is fired out with verve and passion. Saxon's tribute to Motörhead raises the intensity to such an extent that the audience almost reaches a level of hysteria. After that, *And The Bands Played On*, *747 (Strangers In The Night)*, *Crusader* and *Princess Of The Night* are performed by the five onstage as if it will be the final time they'll get the chance to do these tunes.

Despite the inevitability that the show will now run beyond the curfew time, neither band nor crowd are ready to simply fold and head off. No, there's an encore to be done, and Biff states emphatically: "We're staying up here until we finish!"

It doesn't take much to guess which triple-track choice will take us through what remains, with *Heavy Metal Thunder* leading into *Wheels Of Steel*, replete with a throat-ripping audience chantalong, before *Denim And Leather* comes charging over the hills. Perhaps in a small nod to the clock, the band do minimally streamline the last song, but that makes no difference. This is the only way to conclude what's been a grandstand performance, underlining why Saxon are so special.

Despite the unwanted fire alarm, this is an untarnished evening full of mesmerising quality, from Goddess to gods.

Words: **Malcolm Dome** Photos: **Kevin Nixon**

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'Little Caesar are the kind of rockers you wouldn't mess with.'

Little Caesar / Marco Mendoza

London Camden Underworld

Both kinds of music, 'classic' and 'rock'.

★ Marco Mendoza was the guy brave/dumb enough to have become the bassist with Thin Lizzy in their post-Lynott era that began in the mid-90s. Tonight, as well as previewing an impressive solo album *Viva La Rock* he plays songs from his extensive CV, Lizzy's *Chinatown* rubbing shoulders with a Neal Schon solo song *Hole In My Pocket* (they played together in Soul SirkUS), plus *Hey Baby*, which Ted Nugent let him sing live. That probably sounds like a somewhat disjointed set, but oddly it isn't.

Little Caesar vocalist Ron Young was a biker thrown through a bar window by Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator 2*, and the band are the kind of grizzled, tattooed rockers you wouldn't mess with. And this time it seems they've brought a couple of their sons as back-up. They call their sound "bluesy, sweaty, sleazy, R&B-based hard rock'n'roll", but a hit-single remake of Aretha Franklin's hit *Chain Of Fools* adds a dollop of soul.

The Los Angeles band are not precious about pushing their own material – Merle Haggard's *Mama Tried* pops up mid-set, and an encore adds covers of *Nobody Said It Was Easy* by the Four Horsemen (who Young also sang with) and Rod Stewart's *Every Picture Tells A Story* – and a spontaneous jam with Jared James Nichols on a red-hot slab of boogie called *Rum & Coke* brings a taste of the weekend to an icy Wednesday night.

Dave Ling

Little Caesar: bluesy, sweaty, sleazy, R&B-based hard rock'n'rollers.

LITTLE CAESAR: KEVIN NIXON

Brian Fallon

London Koko

Gaslight Anthem frontman brings the Jersey Shore to North London.

★ Like Marlon Brando in a Clash T-shirt, Brian Fallon coulda been a contender. His band, The Gaslight Anthem, had it all going for them, from their Springsteen-meets-Strummer blue-collar rock'n'roll right up to The Boss himself as their corner man.

But, try as they might, the New Jersey band couldn't land a knockout punch, and in 2015 they hung up their gloves and began a hiatus that lasted until this year. Fallon is now two albums into a solo career that follows the same musical path, with the punk rock intensity dialled down a little.

Tonight everyone wants to hear some of Gaslight's songs, but Fallon isn't playing ball. Instead the focus is on his two solo albums: 2016's *Painkillers* and this year's *Sleepwalkers*. In fairness, there's not much difference between the past and the present. *Rosemary* and *Etta James* stick close to the template, although the set is nearly derailed by an eight-minute monologue about how he met his English wife. Just because you've shared a stage with Bruce Springsteen doesn't make you Bruce Springsteen.

By the time he closes with a stripped-down piano version of *The '59 Sound* and a version of U2's *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*, the ship has been righted. The Gaslight Anthem are back for a few lucrative reunion shows later this year, but for now Fallon's doing New Jersey proud on his own.

Dave Everley

Starcrawler

Boston MA Great Scott

Shock-rocking gangles ahoy. Catch them while they're hot.

★ Everything about Starcrawler singer Arrow de Wilde is shocking. Or at least it's meant to be. A rock'n'roll praying mantis, her pale skin, gangly limbs and six-foot frame make her look dangerously underfed. Before the show she darts around the tragically near-empty club in a floor-length faux-fur coat, as much an alien as the eyebrowless Bowie was a lifetime ago.

Once the band kicks in, she hurls herself on stage and disrobes. She's wearing a codpiece… and very little else. After tearing through their sleaze-pop hit *I Love LA* she collapses to the floor. "Unfortunately, we left," she mutters. And then she coughs up some blood.

If there is a next big thing in this tired, debased world, Starcrawler are it. They're hip teenagers from Hollywood who formed the band a couple of years ago when no one was even old enough to drive, never mind drink, and their sound is remarkably authentic, as gritty and raw and glammy as the Manic Street Preachers were in their *Generation Terrorist* days, and cut from a similar 70s New York punk cloth. How or why teenagers in 2018 would sound like Wayne County And The Electric Chairs is one for the ages, but here we are. And they were scary and sexy and amazing tonight. Lightning in a bottle. Catch it while you can.

Sleazegrinder

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

London Brixton O2 Academy

Prolific Australians take flight.

★ Releasing five albums last year might suggest that King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard have trouble locating their quality-control button. In truth, though, they're simply overflowing with ideas.

Tonight's sell-out show in front of a rabid audience familiar with even the outer limits of the band's catalogue is a career high point. The seven-piece play two sets, but cannily avoid the loss of momentum intervals usually cause by keeping the lights down and screening a timer which counts down the 15 minute break second by second.

Not ones to waste valuable playing time with chit-chat, showmanship or even an encore, they simply get on with the job in hand, rattling out a spirit-lifting, double-drummed whirlpool that nods to the swirl of the Grateful Dead and Phish and the more raw White Stripes and Soft Boys, with added flute from leader Stu Mackenzie. *The Lord Of Lightning* is a riff-laden rock anthem, but the evening's centrepiece is the magnificent *Crumbling Castle*, the opening song on last year's *Polygondwanaland*, and for all its tangents it never loses shape or whistleability. King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard's blizzard climaxes with a joyful smorgasbord of delight where the XTC-ish *Big Fig Wasp* collides into *Gamma Knife*, before *Some Context* closes the set with a no-holds-barred tsunami of sound. Exhilarating.

John Aizlewood

"They're living up to the hype that is being bestowed on them"
TEAMROCK.COM
GREYBEARDS
GREYBEARDS
LONGING TO FLY
BONAFIDE UK Tour & New Album 'For The Wilder Minds'
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"This band is more than just another rock act, it's a labour of love" Powerplay Magazine
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11 May LONDON Underworld
12 May GRIMSBY Yardbirds
13 May MANCHESTER Rebellion
15 May YORK Fibbers
16 May CHESTER Live Rooms
17 May GLASGOW Audio
18 May ABERDEEN Assembly
19 May DUNDEE Church
20 May EDINBURGH Bannermans
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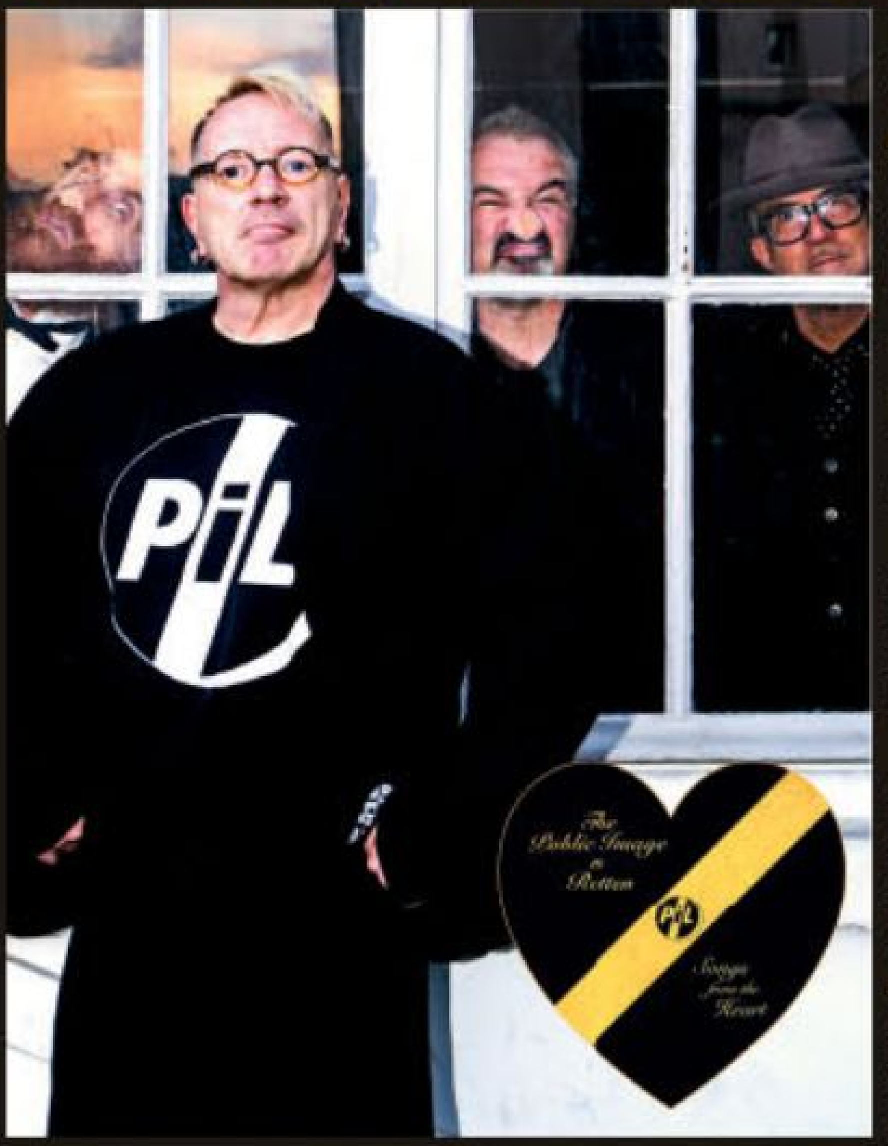

MAY 2018
30 **BRISTOL** O_2 ACADEMY

JUNE 2018
01 **BOURNEMOUTH** O_2 ACADEMY
04 **COVENTRY** THE COPPER ROOMS
06 **NORWICH** THE LCR @ UEA
12 **NEWCASTLE** O_2 ACADEMY
13 **GLASGOW** O_2 ABC
15 **SHEFFIELD** O_2 ACADEMY
16 **MANCHESTER** O_2 RITZ
18 **HULL** ASYLUM @ HULL UNIVERSITY
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SAT	21	NOTTINGHAM	ROCK CITY
SUN	22	MANCHESTER	ACADEMY
TUE	24	GLASGOW	O_2 ABC
WED	25	BRISTOL	O_2 ACADEMY
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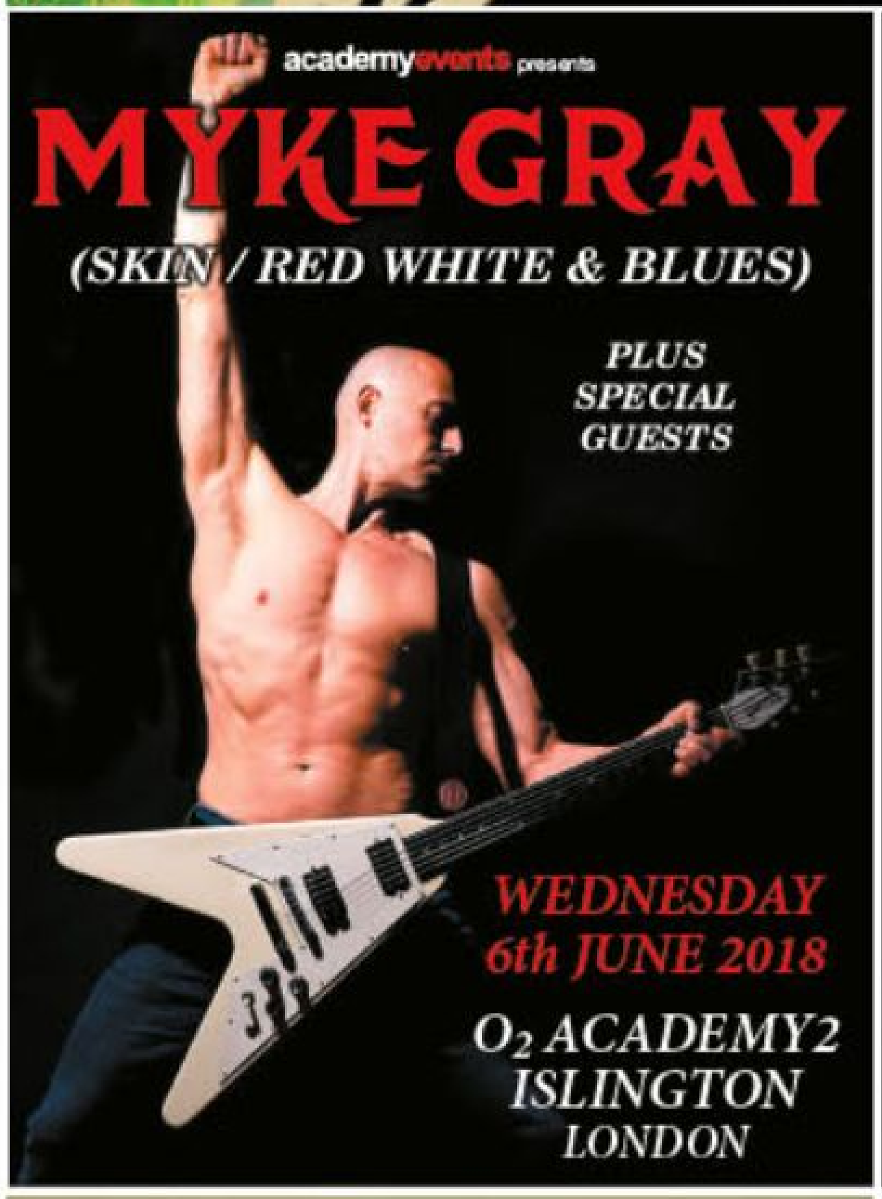

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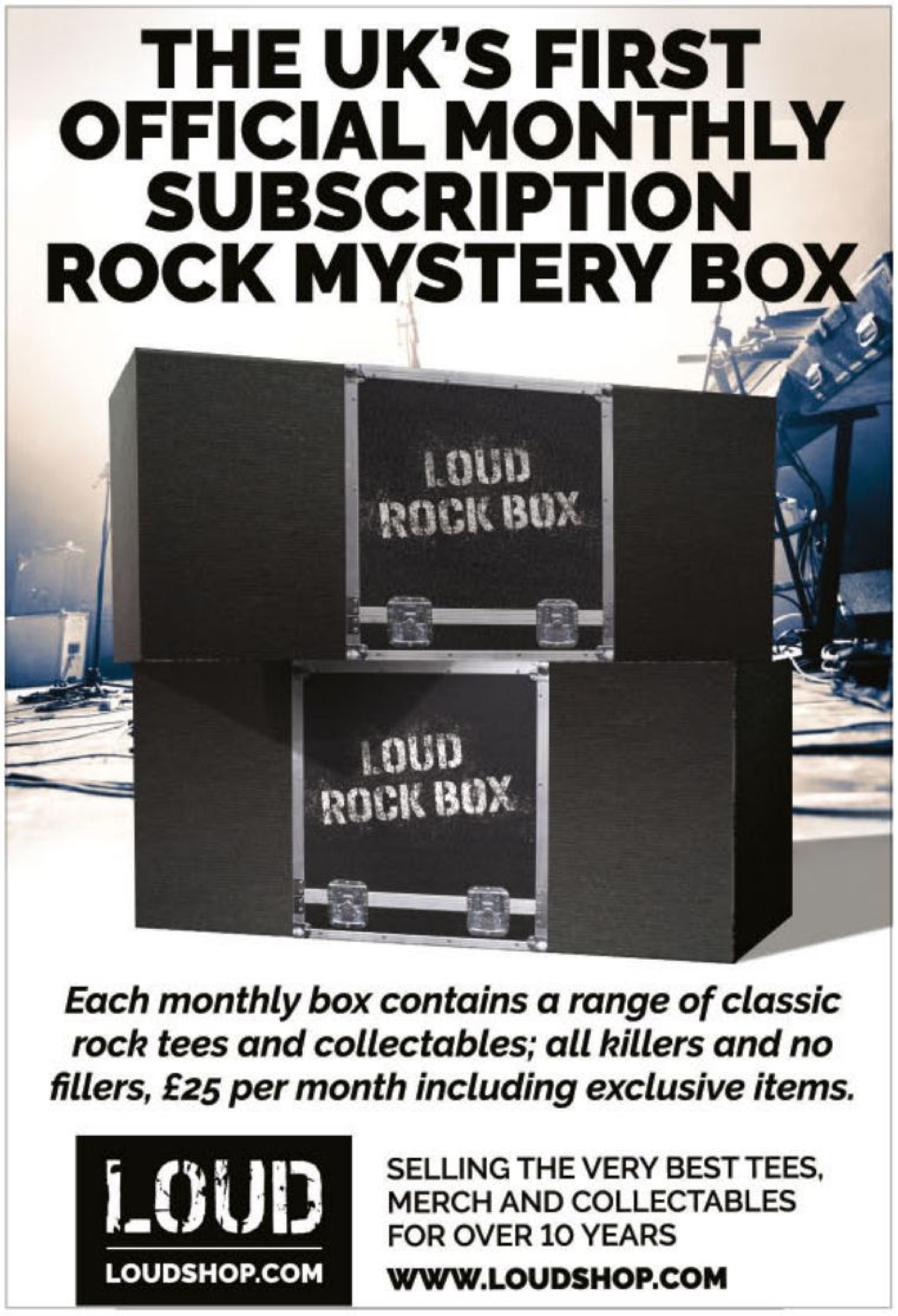
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Heavy Load

Heavy questions for heavy rockers

Former Spiñal Tap bassist **Derek Smalls** on God, the Tap, politics, drugs, getting old, death and not being dead.

Interview: **Dave Everley**

Derek Smalls sits somewhere between 'has been' and 'legend' in the great pantheon of rock'n'roll. Rising to fame as the luxuriantly moustached bassist with British heavy metal icons Spiñal Tap, Smalls was notably the lukewarm water between the fire and ice of frontman David St Hubbins and guitarist Nigel Tufnel. Now well into his 70s, and still as facially hirsute as ever, he's finally releasing his debut solo album, the epic *Smalls Change (Meditations On Ageing)*. "It's *Meditations* Upon *Ageing*," he corrects. "There's a crucial difference."

You've left it a bit late in the day to release your first solo album, haven't you?
That's very kind of you to say. But I was kind of busy with Spiñal Tap for a long time. And then Spiñal Tap reunions. But it doesn't look like there'll be another. So here we are. With a little bit of help from the British Fund for Ageing Rockers, who gave me a grant.

The album features members of Steely Dan, Foo Fighters, Chili Peppers and more. Did anyone refuse to get involved?
Yes, but legally I can't say who. It was a Janine-type situation, that's as much as I can say. Otherwise they'll sue my arse off.

Do you think about death a lot?
At my age you can't help it. Two or three times a day, usually. Once at the start and once at the end. And sometimes once in between if things are working properly.

Are you religious?
Yes. I believe in a higher power. What does God look like? Not an old guy with a robe and a beard. God looks like Phil from Def Leppard.

Is there anything good about getting old?
Oh, it's all good. It means you're not dead. I don't think there's anything good about being dead, though.

What were you like at school?
Short. Young-looking. No facial hair. Exactly what you'd expect a schoolboy to look like.

When did the moustache come along?
When I joined Skaface, a white reggae band. They all had facial hair. They'd bully anyone who didn't have it. I was forced to grow it. Literally.

What are the best and worst drugs you've taken?
[Reels off unpronounceable name that ends in 'oxotine'] It makes you giddy, and then it makes you depressed. So you take another one. That's the best and the worst. One after the other. Confusing.

What was the lowest point of your career?
Leaving Lambsblood, the Christian metal band I was in. They became absolutely huge after I went. I don't think the two things are related.

Where do you stand on reality TV?
Well, I was actually involved in a Dutch reality TV show, *RokStarz*, before they turned into *Tomorrow's Hip Hop Hero*. Then they told me my services were no longer required. Was I surprised? Yes. I might have been Tomorrow's Hip Hop Hero myself.

ROB SHANAHAN/PRESS

"What does God look like? God looks like Phil from Def Leppard."

What was your biggest waste of money?
My Lamborghini. My ex-wife got it in the divorce. I'd only had it a few days. That and the macramé website my girlfriend set up. It was ahead of its time. Or behind the curve. Or both.

You're on a life raft with Nigel Tufnel and David St Hubbins but there's only room for two of you. Who do you throw into the sea so that you survive?
Everyone asks me this and I always give them the same answer. I merge them both until they're a single, higher form of consciousness. Then I throw them both in.

When did you last speak to the other Spiñal Tap guys?
I speak to Nigel every few months. I don't think he's interested in playing the guitar at maximum volume through an amplifier any more. He's breeding miniature farm animals these days, but I think he's hit a wall with that – he's having trouble milking the goats. I get cryptic emails from David occasionally. I think it's Janine who is writing them.

Where do you stand politically?
I try to avoid having that stuff in my life. I don't even know who's in at the moment, if it's the Tories or… the other lot. If the Tories were to make it mandatory to have six strings on your bass, then I might vote for them.

What is your greatest regret?
Definitely the Lamborghini.

What is the secret of your success?
Persistence. Who would have thought the son of Donald 'Duff' Smalls, a telephone handset sanitiser, would have become a rock star? I certainly didn't.

What will be written on your tombstone?
'Dead'.

Smalls Change (Meditations Upon Ageing) is out on April 13 via Twanky Records/BMG, on digital, CD and vinyl.

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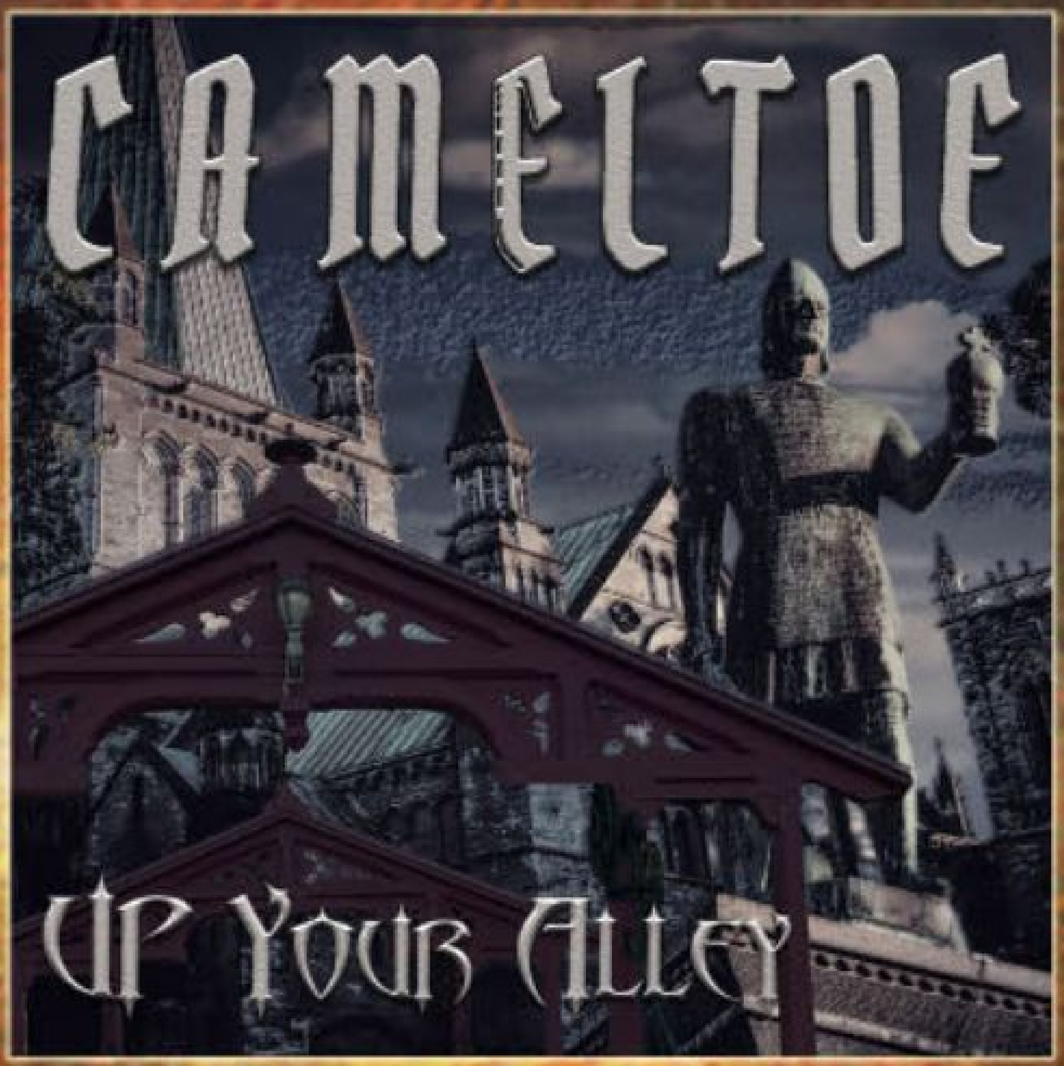

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